

A  
Huguenot  
Saint  
of the  
Twentieth  
Century  
—  
SEIPPEL

*The LIFE OF*  
*ADELE KAMM*

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A Huguenot saint of the  
twentieth century







A LIVING WITNESS  
THE LIFE OF ADELE KAMM

*‘Life and death are alike joy to me.’*





*Adèle Kamm*

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*From the Eleventh French Edition*

# A Huguenot Saint *of the* Twentieth Century

The Life of Adele Kamm

By  
PAUL SEIPPEL  
*Translated by Olive Wyon*

"Life and Death are to me the same joy"



NEW YORK

CHICAGO

TORONTO

Fleming H. Revell Company

LONDON

AND

EDINBURGH



## PREFACE

### TO THE FIFTH FRENCH EDITION

‘ONE of the greatest needs of the present day,’ said Adèle Kamm, ‘is for a succession of living witnesses.’ And the fact that this little book has received such an unexpectedly warm welcome in all quarters, and from so many types of mind, proves that the number of those who feel the need for this kind of living apologetic is indeed large. Adèle Kamm herself was, and still is, one of these ‘living witnesses’ whose influence is far greater than the most convincing arguments. In the radiance shed by such a life, carping criticism fades away like morning mists in the splendour of the dawn. We feel that we are in the presence of a self-evident truth, with which we instinctively agree.

During her lifetime it was the young invalid’s kindly custom to gather in her room a circle of visitors holding widely divergent views, whom

she drew together by the force of her own personality. And since she left us the number has been daily increasing of those to whom she is the most helpful of friends. Her gentle influence is felt by all who come within her reach, and those who would otherwise spend their time in profitless controversies are being united by her spirit of love.

We have received the most touching letters from all kinds of people—ill and well, believers and sceptics, Protestants and Roman Catholics. We wish it were possible to thank each of these correspondents (many of whom we do not know) for their kind appreciation, which has given us great pleasure. At the same time we should like to remind them that the author disclaims any share in the chorus of admiration evoked by such a saintly life. To be allowed to witness the development of such a character, and then to record it for the good of others, is, in his opinion, a sufficiently high honour.

In this connection perhaps the author may be allowed to quote a sentence which, it seems to him, admirably sums up the general tone of these letters, and of the various articles which have



appeared in newspapers and reviews of all shades of opinion. The writer is Victor Giraud, a Roman Catholic of strong convictions and liberal views. This eminent critic of the *Revue des Deux Mondes* would have been better pleased if the author had not called Adèle Kamm 'a *Protestant* saint.' 'In my opinion,' he wrote (in a letter to the author), 'in the presence of such a life ecclesiastical differences should disappear altogether. We ought simply to bow in reverence before it, and adore the great miracle of the Christian Faith.'

Agreed; but let us go a step further and say, 'Such lives belong, not to any particular Church, but to Humanity at large.' Indeed, it has been abundantly proved that Adèle Kamm's example has helped many thoughtful people who are not professing Christians.

Surely, as we gaze at all this suffering, and see the way in which it was transmuted into glorious joy, we must confess that the power of the will to *live* is as great to-day as it has ever been in the past! Our thoughts travel back to that critical moment when the young and unknown sufferer wrestled alone through the silent hours of many

a sleepless night against the tragedy which threatened to overwhelm her life. To understand the wonderful effect of good example, let us measure the result of the victory which she gained over herself. One thing stands out with ever-increasing clearness: by reason of her victory she will set free many a captive soul bound by the fetters of that 'ungodly sorrow,' which, instead of leading the soul upwards towards the light, drags it down into the depths of bitterness and rebellion.

We are dealing here with incontrovertible facts. Similar proofs lie all around us, and we should make it our concern to look for them in our everyday life, for they will give us an inward certainty far beyond the power of any creed or dogma. They show us to what heights of character man may attain.

P. S.

## FOREWORD

SHE was a very modest girl. As long as we had the joy of her presence she would never have wished us to speak of her publicly. Who indeed would have thought of doing so? There are sacrifices which must be made for the welfare of all, in silence and retirement. There are lives whose gentle beauty shrinks from all semblance of self-advertisement. Death, the deliverer, strikes the hour when we may and should speak of them, for it is right that they should be widely known, since they are given to enrich the common inheritance of humanity with fresh examples of heroism and of holiness.

Adèle Kamm made Beethoven's pregnant phrase her own: *Durch Leiden Freude*. She climbed the steep pathway which leads through pain to joy, the joy which nothing can disturb. Even through her sufferings, which she accepted with a smile, she gave joy to others.

The example is all the more inspiring, because the victory was gained, not by one of those heroes of whom M. Romain Rolland has written, to strengthen us for the darker experiences of life, but by a young girl chained to a bed of pain. Each of us should feel better able to follow it, at least at a distance.

For the sake of those who are called to suffer—and which of us is not ?—I wish to tell as simply as possible the story of this short and fruitful life. Putting aside my personal convictions, which have no place here, I shall try to give a clear picture of Adèle Kamm's experiences, and of the religious faith by which she was upheld.

I wish to make her voice heard, and not my own. She will bear her own witness on almost every page, thanks to the letters which her mother, her sister, her friends, and the members of the Society of the 'Coccinelles' have kindly lent me. To them all, and particularly to Madame Kamm-Borgeaud, and M. le Pasteur Hoffet, I wish to make my grateful acknowledgments. Without their help I could not have brought this work to a satisfactory conclusion. They have understood that, whatever may have been Adèle's

desire to remain unknown, it was necessary when she was withdrawn from our sight that her gracious personality should be allowed to shine as far and as brilliantly as possible.

May this little book help to make her known as she really was. It was not so much by her clear understanding, by her quick and practical intelligence, that she differed from many other simple girls of our country. Her value lay in another direction, in her will-power and in her heart. If we would estimate her aright, we must lay aside all intellectual pride and confess, with Pascal, that the supreme greatness of man lies *dans l'ordre de la charité*.

## TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

THE Translator desires to offer her thanks to the following friends, from whom she has received generous help and valuable counsel :

The Rev. R. A. Aytoun, M.A., Dr. Rendel Harris, Mr. Basil Mathews, M.A., and the Rev. E. Shillito, M.A.; especially to one of them, who has translated the French poems into English verse.

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## CHAPTER I

### ANCESTRY AND ENVIRONMENT

‘The great triumph of Christianity is to produce a few saints. They raise our ideal of humanity. They make us restless and discontented with our own lives as long as they are lived on a lower plane.’—FORBES ROBINSON.

ADÈLE KAMM came of soldier stock. From her ancestors, on both sides, she inherited a healthy and energetic temperament. Her father was descended from a family which inhabited the mountain region of Glarus, many of whose members had reached a great age. The grandfather, Jean-Melchior Kamm, was a non-commissioned officer in the army of Napoleon I., who made the extremely wearisome march from Naples to Moscow with his regiment. He fought at Bérésina by the side of a certain Vaudois officer, Captain Rey. Fearing that they would never see their country again, the two friends vowed they would never separate. They kept their word. Rey having been wounded, Kamm remained with

him instead of joining the retreat, and both were taken prisoners. This, however, saved their lives, for their whole company perished from cold, hunger, or from the attacks of the Cossacks. After five years' imprisonment at Riga, where they worked in the harbour, the Vaudois captain and the Glaronais sergeant, still inseparable, set their faces homewards, and settled down at Lausanne. Kamm bought the Hotel 'de l'Etoile,' which prospered under his able management, and eventually became the best-patronised house in Lausanne under the name of the Hotel of the 'Grand Pont.' At his death he left the business to his three children, two sons and a daughter, and for a time all three carried it on together. Thus Adèle Kamm was descended on the paternal side from one of those excellent families of hotel-keepers, of whom there are so many in Switzerland; people who are both hard-working and endowed with business capacity. We shall see that she inherited some of their practical qualities.

Many inhabitants of Lausanne still remember her father, Henri Kamm, an upright and gracious character, who had preserved the courteous manners of olden times. He had a passionate

love of mathematics, and willingly gave up his share in the hotel to his brother and sister, in order to be able to devote himself entirely to his beloved studies. At the age of fifty-eight he married the daughter (who was much younger than himself) of his intimate friend, the old 'Colonel Fédéral' Borgeaud, Curator of the Cantonal Library. The ancestors of the Borgeauds are said to have been Huguenots from Savoy, who fled into Vaud after the successful Counter-Reformation of St. Francis de Sales. In this family also occur remarkable instances of longevity.

It will be seen that Adèle had no mean inheritance. Her strong vitality, added to a spiritual power which lifted her above herself, enabled her to resist disease with unwonted energy.

It is said that she most resembled her grandfather, Constant Borgeaud, particularly in character. He was one of the most original and popular figures in that charming little half-rural city of Lausanne which we used to know and love. How much it has changed since then! The 'colonel,' as we called him, was a racy local character of a type one scarcely ever meets in larger towns, where personalities lose their dis-

tinctness of outline like coins which pass innumerable times across shop counters. He was a soldier in every sense, and was of a generous and chivalrous disposition. In his youth he had had a great love of adventure, and in 1848, at the time when the Italians rose against the Austrian rule, he spent his entire fortune in raising a company of volunteers at Lausanne. At the head of his men he gallantly met the Austrian attack at the Col du Tonal, and kept the enemy at bay until, after the defeat of Custozza, he received orders to evacuate the position. It is doubtless from the colonel that Adèle Kamm inherited both her enthusiastic disposition and her almost masculine energy. She was fond of military metaphors. Her mother and her sister laughingly called her the 'Old Trooper,' and she herself, after each fresh attack of illness, would say gaily, 'I am an old soldier who has returned, wounded, from many a campaign.'

After having tried widely different professions, the colonel taught mathematics to the schoolboys of Aubonne. It was through his taste for ingenious problems and for chess that he came to know Henri Kamm. After their marriage Kamm

and his wife were unremitting in their thoughtful and affectionate care for the old man. The colonel took all his meals with them while they lived in Lausanne. Later on the whole family settled near Céligny, where the colonel passed away suddenly on the 18th of January 1905, at the age of eighty-five, surrounded by those whom he loved best in the world, his daughter and his two granddaughters.

Adèle Kamm far surpassed her ancestors by the greatness of her moral personality, while carrying on the family traditions in other ways. We must make some allowance for the influence of heredity, in order to understand the nature of her physiological temperament and certain traits in her disposition; but we believe it would be an error to attribute them entirely to the elements provided by heredity, environment, and education. Adèle Kamm was one of those beautiful exceptions which unexpectedly emerge, no matter where, to demonstrate the latent possibilities which lie concealed in humanity. One must consider her as a splendid example of the spontaneous fruition of religious genius. We believe that these exceptions do not spring from the

mechanical order of the universe, but that through them the Divine enters into the world.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 'Religious genius is always individualistic in its origin and social in its aim,' says M. Théodore Flournoy. 'It is individualistic in its origin: it is well to emphasise this in face of a sociology much in vogue to-day, which maintains that everything in religion may be traced to the working out of social forces, to solidarity of action, etc. This, I believe, does violence to the facts. Without undervaluing the suggestive and stimulating influence of environment, education, and race, we must still lay stress on the deeply individual, original, unexpected, and after all inexplicable character of religious genius' (Théodore Flournoy, *Le Génie religieux*. Foyer Solidariste).



## CHAPTER II

### CHILDHOOD AND EARLY GIRLHOOD

'I would have gone ; God bade me stay.  
I would have worked ; God bade me rest.  
He broke my will from day to day.  
He read my yearnings unexpressed,  
And said them nay.'—C. ROSSETTI.

ADÈLE KAMM was born at Lausanne on the 1st of October 1885. The principal companions of her childhood were her father and her grandfather ; she grew up in quiet, serious surroundings, in an atmosphere which was highly moral but not distinctively religious. She was a pretty child, with large dark eyes and golden hair, for she was fair at this period : it was difficult to realise it in later years, when we saw her beautiful brown hair. Adèle was already a serious little person, in spite of her outbursts of gaiety ; she had a clear, practical turn of mind, and was by no means a dreamer. Towards the close of her short life, returning in thought to the years of her child-

hood, she wrote to an intimate friend : ‘ I have nothing German in my temperament, either physically or mentally. When I read Freytag’s *Soll und Haben*, I feel that I am just like Sabina, who was so fond of her piles of sheets, her table-napkins, and her old china. . . . When I was quite little, I did not care for playing with other children, and would often go away by myself to work and read, so that, by the time I was seven, I had already begun my trousseau by making yards and yards of crochet-lace, which I did while reading Jules Verne, Maryan, Freytag, etc. Those *were* happy afternoons, and how good my friends were to me ! ’

Adèle Kamm looked the picture of health until she was eight years old, when she had an attack of bronchitis which slightly affected her lungs ; the mischief, however, seemed to disappear quickly without leaving any trace. She was able to attend the Vinet school regularly, and thus came under the excellent influence of the headmistress, Miss S. G.<sup>1</sup> Adèle was never at any period of her

<sup>1</sup> In a letter to Mrs. F. G., written some years later, Adèle said : ‘ Miss S. G. was the person who influenced me most during my childhood and early girlhood.’

## CHILDHOOD AND EARLY GIRLHOOD 9

life a scholar, but music was her passion. She studied it with that ardent enthusiasm with which she took up everything that interested her. It was one of her bitterest disappointments later on that she was obliged to give up her beloved piano. Looking back on the happy hours which she had spent in this pursuit, she wrote in 1909 to a friend: 'I am thinking about my musical studies, which were so suddenly interrupted at the Conservatoire a year before I could win that much-desired diploma. How I loved it all, and yet it has been taken right out of my life, along with the sweetness, happiness, and inward inspiration which were bound up with it. It certainly led me to overtax my physical strength, but at the same time it taught me the value of quiet meditation, which means so much in illness.'

About the time when she had finished her course of religious instruction under M. de Loës, a clergyman of the Established Church, she suddenly fell ill. On the day of her first Communion she looked deadly pale in her white dress, was shivering with fever, and hardly knew what she was doing. 'I did not hear the pastor's words,' she told me, 'I was so terribly giddy. I only

remember praying fervently that God would let me make good use of the remainder of my life.' How richly was this prayer to be answered! It showed even at that early age the unselfish disposition of this practical little Huguenot, so entirely free from that religious selfishness which thinks only of its personal salvation.

A somewhat suspicious abscess appeared in the nape of her neck, but in spite of a bacteriological examination it was impossible to discover its exact nature, and little by little it disappeared. Adèle was considered cured. She resumed her ordinary life, and became engaged, without any objection being raised by the doctors. At that time she was a beautiful, fascinating, and happy girl, who loved pretty clothes, dancing, and all the pleasures of her age. Nevertheless, she was by no means frivolous, and already felt the seriousness of life.

She was sent to England to complete her education, and her stay there left many happy memories. The house where she boarded closed during the summer months, and she applied for a temporary situation through a governesses' agency. The secretary gave her a position of trust. She had

to take charge of a family of young children during the absence of their mother, Mrs. MacA., the wife of a member of parliament, who had to attend the coronation festivities of Edward VII. with her husband. Attracted by the pretty face of the young Swiss girl, and by her air of decision, Mrs. MacA. carried her off at once, and took her to her estate at Pirbright in Surrey. There had been no time to inform her parents at Lausanne, and they were much surprised when they heard about this adventure.

For a young girl of seventeen, who knew very little English, the task devolving upon Adèle was not easy. She was not at all shy. She showed herself in her true light: a little person possessing a strong will, plenty of tact, and so much playful charm that every one fell in love with her. The following year it was her turn to be a guest at Pirbright. From July 1904 to January 1905 she paid a third visit to her English friends, and travelled with them in Scotland. She then seemed to have almost regained her health, but, after a lull of more than two years, the dread disease was about to appear in a form so serious that it could no longer be mistaken. In the

middle of winter she rejoined her family, which had settled at some distance from Céligny, at Vallon, and later at Petit Bois. She often went into Geneva for her piano lessons, and became closely attached to Miss M. B., a mistress at the Conservatoire, with whom, in spite of the difference in their ages, she had much in common. It was the first of those ardent feminine friendships which played such a large part in the life of Adèle Kamm.<sup>1</sup>

As the result of a chill she had an attack of pleurisy, and tubercular symptoms appeared. A cure at Weissenbourg was tried for her during the course of the summer. The resident doctor

<sup>1</sup> Later, during her long illness, Adèle Kamm carried on a regular correspondence with Miss M. B., from which we shall have occasion to quote more than once. In 1908 she wrote to her thus:

‘I bless the day when I learnt to know you. I seemed already conscious of the influence you would have upon me. . . . You help me more than you have any idea. Every one has her own atmosphere, and, at the end of the day, mine is distinctly influenced by that of my visitors. When *you* come, you inspire me with new strength for the future, and people who possess such a power are only too rare. You are my ideal . . . it is my great desire, if you will help me, to have a good influence, to spread a spirit of peace and contentment in my own circle; that is indeed one of the best things on earth. . . . I feel that you have struggled and conquered, and that in spite of all the difficulty, fatigue, and annoyance, which enter into your daily experience your peace is untroubled. . . .’

recognised the seriousness of her illness. He explained it without hesitation to the young invalid. This is often done on principle by German-Swiss doctors. They wish their patients to face the danger, in order that they may at once do all in their power to ward it off. Sometimes they do not quite realise that the unvarnished truth may have a very depressing effect upon nervous patients.

Fortunately Adèle's character was strong enough to bear the truth, even when it was told her in an almost brutal manner. The doctor said to her : ' You have only one chance of recovery. Would you like me to try some injections with the tuberculin of Dr. Denis of Louvain ? ' The use of this vaccine, which had just been discovered, was then considered to be attended with a certain amount of risk. Adèle did not hesitate. She wrote a very tender letter to her parents. ' I am ready,' she said, ' to try these injections for your sake.' Mme. Kamm went off at once to join her daughter. The treatment was tried, but without success. Adèle had to be brought back to Petit Bois in the middle of August 1905, not so well as when she left it. In the autumn the family moved

to the villa La Bergeronnette, at Grange-Canal, near Geneva. It was easier there to give the invalid the care she needed, for she was rapidly getting worse. After having had the hope of restoration to health, and the prospect of radiant happiness in the future, Adèle Kamm was to be shut out from that active life in which she longed to share with all the ardour of her tender and passionate heart, with all the energy of her will, already so strong and so ready for a woman's highest duties. Suddenly all her hopes were shattered, and this beautiful and courageous girl was henceforth a complete invalid.



## CHAPTER III

### THE EARLY STAGES OF THE ILLNESS

‘Does the road wind uphill all the way ?

Yes, to the very end.

Will the day’s journey take the whole long day ?

From morn to night, my friend.’—C. ROSSETTI.

ADÈLE KAMM has described the spiritual phases of her illness with absolute precision. ‘During the first weeks of my illness,’ she wrote, ‘no inward relief was possible. Not only was my family as despairing as I was myself, but the chaos was too complete, the storm too violent, to let me hear even a message of comfort . . . the building had to fall, and the ruins had to remain ruins for a certain length of time.’

Then followed a second phase, when despair and acute suffering gave way to an ‘aching stupor.’ Weakened by the terrible crisis through which she had passed, she was in danger of falling an easy prey to any of the influences, good or bad, which might fight for her. Writing about it later

on, she said: 'This is the solemn moment when the future may be decided. May we then hear words which rouse and invigorate ; and if we have not yet learnt submission, may we still be able to say, like Jesus in Gethsemane, "O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me : nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt."' '

Adèle Kamm's energetic, loving spirit shone out clearly even through this dark time. So far as she herself was concerned she accepted the situation, but she was grieved beyond measure for her dear ones. 'I saw them crying about me,' she wrote ; 'I read weariness on those dear faces, pale with anxiety, distress, and the strain of constant nursing, and then I felt : "Can I remain a useless spectator of all this extra press of work, caused by my forced inactivity . . . and look on at it all unmoved ? . . . No," I cried inwardly, "at all costs I must get up ; I will see whether I cannot conquer by force of will ; I will smile when I feel ill ; I will walk about even when I am feverish ; I will do my best to keep going as long as ever I can."' '

So she struggled with all her might and main. She dressed herself, went downstairs, and out into

the garden. The lilac and wistaria bushes were in bloom. All nature was holding high festival. For the moment she felt new life pulsing through her. She drank in the fresh air and sunshine with real delight. 'Surely,' she thought, 'this dreadful illness is only a bad dream after all, which the broad light of day has dispelled!' But suddenly she began to shiver, her teeth chattered, her limbs began to tremble and give way under her. 'My head swam with giddiness, and yet outwardly nothing was changed; the sun was still shining, the birds went on singing, and the insects were buzzing as happily as ever. . . .'

'With difficulty,' wrote Adèle Kamm, 'I reached the house; I felt that I could no longer resist this overwhelming sense of physical misery; I wanted to hide myself like a sick animal, and my bed was the only refuge for my failing strength. Alas, the desired relief did not come! I was racked with fever; all night long I was tormented by weird dreams, followed by horrible nightmares in which I seemed to be struggling against an enormous weight which oppressed and stifled me. Morning came at last, and with it calmness . . . but it was an awful calm, a quiet charged with

electricity. . . . I realised that I was conquered by illness, and that it would be a long time before I could hope for any improvement.'

At this stage she said still, 'For a long time.' It was only much later that she dared to say, 'For ever.' With remarkable clearness Adèle Kamm continues (for several pages of her booklet) this analysis of the spiritual phases of her illness. And we might almost imagine that she had passed through them rapidly. In reality she had to tread a very painful road for years before she reached the third stage, that of *cold reality*, when all illusions had been dispelled. It was in the spring of 1908, during a long stay at Cannes, that the brave girl, physically conquered by disease, accepted the fact that she must take her place among the incurables of the world. And this defeat, as we shall see, was to be the signal for a decisive victory.

•

## CHAPTER IV

### IN THE MOUNTAINS

‘The man who most nearly approaches success is he whose spirit is not broken under pressure, whose faith is not quenched by clouds, whose purpose from first to last is not deflected by threat or allurements. High aspiration always leads into the thick of trouble; there is no roundabout way to the goal.’—BISHOP BRENT.

ADÈLE KAMM spent two winters—1905 to 1907—at the sanatorium at Leysin. I can remember, when I was a small boy in knickerbockers, clambering up one evening to this pretty little Alpine village in order to climb the Tour d’Aï on the following day. There was no hotel, not even an inn: we had to sleep on the hay in a barn. Forty years later I spent two glorious days up there. What a change! The general outline is the same, with its cottages huddled together on a strip of level ground, and the squat old church tower in the centre. But on the slope of the mountain, whose wooded summit shelters Leysin from the piercing

breath of the north wind, there has sprung up a whole town of sanatoria, big hotels, villas, and shops. There are fifteen hundred patients and seventeen doctors ! And building is always going on, for there is never room enough to take in those who flock to Leysin from all directions, in the hope of regaining their health in the pure mountain air.

The first impression is not sad, as I had imagined it would be. That air of exaggerated attention to hygiene, so much affected in other places, has been avoided in the hotels. In fact, the rooms are really attractive, and do not in the least resemble the wards of a hospital. At night the dinner-table presents an animated appearance ; many faces are tanned from exposure to sun and air ; at times the gaiety becomes almost noisy, and there is not a solitary cough to be heard. The patients are only allowed to cough in their own apartments. And when they have been three days in the place, they all learn to submit to this rule. Those who are more seriously ill are not visible. They remain lying out on their invalid-chairs, sometimes till half-past nine at night. These open-air wards are everywhere, even on

the roofs of the hotels, and they all face south. The stronger patients go out of doors as soon as the sun has appeared over the peak of the Chamosaire. They skate, toboggan, and go for walks in that warm sunshine, which sometimes, in sheltered spots, sends the temperature up to more than 104 degrees without melting the snow. They lead the merry life of a holiday resort.

At a very short distance from the village one can be quite alone. The snow-laden branches of the pines soon form a screen which hides the hotels. Everything is silent and motionless. How strange is this absolute silence among the snows! The wonderful Alpine winter throws its spell over everything it touches. Even the familiar Chaussy and Chamossaire put on a royal dignity in their ermine mantle. The glen slopes down to the Rhone valley in a steep descent to where the Simplon trains can be seen passing to and fro, the only reminder of the feverish life led by active humanity below. But our gaze does not linger there. We look further and higher, up to the beautiful pyramid of the Dent du Midi, the glory of French Switzerland. From Leysin three-fourths of it can be seen in all its majesty. Its

tremendous size is very imposing. One never tires of admiring the sublime boldness with which, rising from massive foundations, its 'seven mystic spires' pierce the ether. For two whole winters, therefore, Adèle Kamm, bound by physical infirmity, gazed upon this unique mountain, which seems made to inspire fainting souls with heroic courage and passionate aspiration.

And before her there was Henry Warnery. How quickly are we forgotten ! How little is his name known up there ! Leysin is a wayside rest-house for invalids. They arrive, they spend some months there, and then they pass on to fulfil their destiny, and their places are taken by others. Which of them has any interest in the fact that a poet, their fellow-sufferer, spent two winters there ; that through much sorrow and renunciation he discovered 'The Way of Hope' ; and that, while there, he wrote a book, *In the Alps*, a poem describing his struggle and his victory ?

'Happy the days when as a pilgrim walks  
Devoutly bowed above the holy way,  
I come again to plunge my soul within  
The holy waters ; for 'tis there its wing  
Has broken through the net that held it fast  
Far from the summits blue ;



'Tis there its eyes re-opened to the light,  
Those eyes that, closed so long, knew not  
As once they knew that in the world of men  
The only happy souls are they who love.'

Adèle Kamm discovered at Leysin some traces of the poet who had preceded her. She trod the self-same path; for this secluded spot, over three thousand feet above the mists and tumult of the valley, seems destined to be a battleground where the soul must meet with victory or defeat. Perhaps life is more intense there than anywhere else, just because it is a fight against the forces of destruction.

Certainly, it does not do to talk to doctors about the novel *Les Embrasés*. They smile at it. But is it not true that often, at the beginning of tubercular trouble, there is a kind of nervous excitement which may lead to extreme lack of self-restraint? It is not necessary to recall here the desperate deed of that wretched madman, who, for no reason at all, by one shot, cut short Dr. Burnier's useful life. Fortunately, that is an isolated instance. It might have happened anywhere else. Still, I believe that in such a small cosmopolitan circle, where idleness is practically

the rule, it is easy to carry everything to extremes—heroic renunciation, as we have seen, and also the vain attempt to blind oneself to the true state of things; the desire to enjoy to the full what remains of a short life; and, above all, the cynical selfishness only too often developed by illness.

In this little world, so new to her, Adèle Kamm had an opportunity of seeing much that was interesting, and of widening her knowledge of life. Her eyes were indeed too pure to mark the evil. And it was quite natural that those who possessed a like nobility of spirit should be attracted by her. In connection with her first visit to Leysin, Adèle has paid a touching tribute to the influence of a young Brazilian girl, Isalina Leaô, whose invalid-chair was placed beside hers in the open-air ward. She was tall, slender, and graceful, with dark eyes which ‘shone like diamonds in a face with a complexion so delicately pink and white that the contrast was striking.’

The young foreigner sat opposite Adèle Kamm at meals.

‘A certain unspoken sympathy sprang up

between us,' says Adèle,<sup>1</sup> 'owing to the difficulty which we both found in getting our food down. I saw her bosom heaving with sighs, her head drooping forward, her eyes gazing at me, with such a sorrowful and yet peaceful expression, that this look was imprinted for ever on my memory. This gaze changed my rebellion into submission; it said so gently, "Suffering exists, we cannot alter that, but we must trust." And this faith sustained her during the two years of life which yet remained, through months of acute suffering, and right up to death itself, and the atmosphere around her was so full of peace that she was able to comfort her dear ones in their sorrow.'

The two young invalids became very intimate.

<sup>1</sup> At the time of Isalina Leão's death Adèle Kamm wrote from Geneva to a friend: 'My poor dear Isalina Leão passed away yesterday at Leysin, where she had just arrived from Brazil with her whole family. . . . She was my first invalid friend; we mutually encouraged each other, and we were so intimate and so much alike in temperament and in suffering that it seems strange to me that she should have gone away alone, and that I should be left behind. I do not grieve unduly, for I believe that her spirit is nearer to me now than when the ocean separated us, and, were it not for her poor family, I would rejoice with her to-day. . . . She struggled and suffered so much, and now at last she has conquered; she is at rest in the glory of heaven, a rest well merited indeed . . . she must be a very radiant angel, for in spite of her disease she made a wonderful impression of purity and peace.'

Isalina told the story of her life and troubles to her new friend, without ever allowing a complaint or a murmur to pass her lips. 'Only once,' says Adèle Kamm, 'one hot tear fell on my hand.' And she adds: 'I wept. What was my suffering, my force of character, compared with hers? And up to that time I had been murmuring. . . . I felt ashamed of my rebellion and ingratitude . . . I saw what it meant to bear sorrow nobly . . . and now my heart is full of the spirit of joy and peace and gratitude, which I hope I may never lose any more!'

When the spring came, and Adèle left the sanatorium to return to the plain, she was very far from being cured in body, but she had regained her spiritual vigour. And, following the example of Isalina Leaô, she was ready to tread with a firm step the steep road which was to lead her to such a height.

## CHAPTER V

### THE SECOND VISIT TO LEYSIN

‘John, do you see that bed of resignation?’—‘It’s doin’ bravely, sir.’—‘John, I will not have it in my garden; it flatters not the eye and comforts not the stomach; root it out.’—‘Sir, I ha’e seen o’ them that rase as high as nettles; gran’ plants!’—‘What then? Were they as tall as Alps, if still unsavoury and bleak, what matters it? Out with it then; and in its place put Laughter, and a Good Conceit (that capital home evergreen), and a bush of Flowering Piety—but see it be the flowering sort—the other species is no ornament to any gentleman’s Back Garden.’

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

As we have already seen the Kamm family had moved into a country house in the neighbourhood of Geneva, which bore a charming name: ‘La Bergeronnette’ (The Little Shepherdess). It was there that Adèle spent the summer of 1906. The walks she loved were forbidden. But the weather that year was particularly fine, and on warm days she could still come down and lie out in the garden on a reclining chair, in the shade of some pine-trees. Her quick observant mind

found plenty of occupation. She was keenly interested in the quiet life of Nature which she could watch from her couch. Sometimes she had pleasant visitors : wrens, tomtits, or a couple of redstarts, whose conjugal disputes were a source of much amusement to her. Then she made friends with the squirrels. 'These delightful creatures,'<sup>1</sup> she writes, 'took no notice whatever of my presence, but settled themselves comfortably on a branch just above my head, and began picking nuts with their front paws and sharp teeth. Their long tails waved gracefully to and fro, while I had to put up with a shower of empty nutshells which they threw down on me in the cheekiest style. But when I tired of the game, I had only to clap my hands, and away they would scamper, some taking refuge in neighbouring pine-trees, while others darted off to a fence where they performed acrobatic feats, swaying from side to side without once losing their balance, while I lay and laughed at them with all my heart.'

Adèle began to spread around her the peace which she had won at Leysin. Her own family

<sup>1</sup> *Joyful in Tribulation*, p. 25.

circle was the first to reap the benefit. 'That summer,' she writes, 'I felt a deep sense of inward contentment and thankfulness in being able to live at home again. Every one had accepted the fact of my illness, and everything seemed to go on as happily as it used to do.' She would not allow her physical suffering to cloud her own happiness, and still less that of those she loved. Even then this little Stoic was severe towards herself and thoughtful for others. 'My plan has been a good one,' she wrote to a friend, 'to be hard on myself, to allow no self-pity, nothing which weakens and thus obscures the purpose of trial, which ought to have a bracing effect. That is the reason why, even in little things, such as keeping a light burning at night, I will not give way. I ought to be as strong and able to be alone at night as in the day. But I do love clear nights when I can see a star shining through my open window. . . .'

When she went up to Leysin again, in the autumn of 1906, she was ready to begin her ministry among her fellow-sufferers. Though this second visit brought her no improvement of health, yet it left a 'glorious memory' behind it. 'It proved,'

she writes, 'more inwardly helpful than I had ever expected, for it gave me a new and wonderful insight into the kindness of humanity.' This kindness, which the young invalid experienced so abundantly, was above all the reflection of that which filled her own heart. Henceforth she was in a position to give even more than she received.

In spite of every care that was taken of her the disease made rapid strides. It was not long before she was obliged to keep entirely to her room in the Grand Hotel. At first, on sunny days, she was allowed to lie out for a few hours on her balcony, then even this pleasure was forbidden. 'I am still in bed,' she wrote on the 12th of December. 'At present I am not allowed to get up at all, although I have no fever, and I amuse myself by watching the snowflakes which float right in on to the counterpane. The snow is nearly three feet deep, and as I lie I can see the people with their bobsleighs and skis.'

Her room was on the fifth story. She liked it for its quietness and for the beautiful view from the balcony. Sometimes she received interesting visitors, and she had a new friend who played henceforth a great part in her life. Miss



O. de J. was not ill. She had come to Leysin to look after her brother. This girl, as unselfish and generous as Adèle, exerted a deeply helpful influence upon those around her 'by her sympathetic, sensitive, and trustful disposition, in which there was no room for suspicion, doubt, or coldness . . . then, also, by her great desire to give happiness to those around her, in which she never spared herself any trouble or fatigue . . . and, lastly, by her sweet cheeriness and by the love and energy and seriousness, and the gentle, comforting words which she gave so freely to all those with whom she came into contact.'<sup>1</sup>

Adèle Kamm also became very intimate with the resident chaplain, Mr. H., and his wife. They paid her frequent visits, and were very fond of her. Later on Adèle took a keen interest in a fine project started by Mr. H., a hostel and employment bureau for poorer patients. The long and serious conversations which she had with him stimulated and helped her greatly. We shall see more of this at a later stage. Nor did she forget her friends in the valley, with whom she corresponded regularly. Some letters to

<sup>1</sup> *Joyful in Tribulation*, p. 33.

Miss M. B., her former music-mistress at Geneva, give us a glimpse of her daily life at Leysin :

‘LEYSIN, 20th February 1907.

‘. . . My friend is intensely sympathetic, and words fail to describe the blessing she is to many. What a variety of character there is around us ! Some have been embittered by their long and hopeless illness, they have no happy memories to cheer them, they simply live dully from one day to another, and it is pitiful to see them. O. finds much to do among these sufferers, and sees her endeavours crowned with success. For instance, there is X., the most misanthropic person in the hotel. Well, by freely offering him her friendship and confidence, she has succeeded in making him come out of his shell, and he is gradually mixing with others again. A few days ago he actually left his room, and talked with some friends, and the other day he even asked my friend to think of him in church, and to pray for him. It is nothing short of a miracle, and I was very much touched when she told me about it. I believe that only a woman has the requisite

delicacy for such a task, for all the doctors' efforts to help him were unavailing.

'Others again stir us to feelings of admiration, mingled with sadness, when we remember that in a short time their course will be over. There are two people who interest us specially in this respect. One is a young man, talented, well-educated, and of a rare and beautiful spirit. He manages all the acting, and every one admires and loves him, for he never thinks of himself, but spends all his remaining strength on this work of charity. At the most he can only live a few months longer, and we cannot help wondering why such people, who can do so much good, are taken away so soon. He is so patient and resigned that it makes people feel very bad when they see him directing this comedy, knowing as they do that it is his last piece of work. The other is a girl from the Argentine, a delightful creature, most attractive and gracious. This poor thing will also die very soon, and she has asked to be allowed to have one more bit of fun, and wants to take part in the bobsleigh Flower Carnival. Many eyes filled with tears at the sight of this lovely girl, so pink and white, in a veritable cradle

of roses and carnations. The second doctor simply could not stand it, and came up to visit me, sick of life and of his profession. There are so many others too to study, for we number more than two hundred.

‘I tell you all this, dear friend, to help you to realise the effect music has not only for me, but for all of us here. It is a sore trial to me that I cannot play any more, for the piano has been my great joy since I was quite little. Though at home I loved to hear music, here I simply cannot bear it; it excites me too painfully. Personally, it does me good, but I dare not think of these unhappy people at the same time; it touches me too deeply. And when I think of the sad life-histories of every one, the disappointments and despair hidden under this apparent gaiety, and realise that all this is drawn together into a secret and subtle harmony, I must confess myself beaten, and I can’t listen any more. Every one is like me, that is why we generally have so few concerts. . . .’

At Christmas time Adèle had a delightful surprise. Some friends had decorated several little Christmas trees, which they lit up and placed

round her room to remind her of other happy Christmas Days. Her own relatives had sent her a present of a bedspread and various indoor garments, all of which were pink, and so well had they managed it that her room was transformed into a rose-pink bower. It was a happy scene. She had a constant stream of visitors. One after another the other patients came in to tell her of their own happiness or suffering ; they sat by her in a chair which soon became known as 'The Armchair of Confidences.' Thus Adèle found full scope for her delicate psychological sense, and for that great gift of sympathy which enabled her to enter into the inmost life of others and bring them comfort and encouragement.

'I was inwardly much exercised,' she tells us. 'How could I find a means to respond to this confidence, not merely by sympathy, but also by giving the right spiritual relief in each instance ? This inward travail led me to the purest, sweetest joy that we can experience, that of living for the happiness of others. I fully understood the object of those trials and difficulties which seem to give us a better understanding of this present

life. How can we attempt to console if we have not suffered ourselves ? ' <sup>1</sup>

Adèle Kamm had one great qualification for this mission which she had adopted—cheerfulness. Every one who had the privilege of intercourse with her was impressed by it. Her Christian faith was of a robust and healthy type. She had a horror of the moralising, gloomy, or sentimental attitude in religion. Her life was gracious and radiant. Her gaiety never forsook her, not even when she was at her worst ; she was as jolly as a schoolboy. Even in her close confinement to bed she found all sorts of unexpected ways of amusing herself. On Boxing Day she wrote to Miss M. B. :

‘ I am surprised to find that half of my time here is already over. I should so like to get strong enough to go back to Chêne, but a snail’s pace describes my progress at present, and there are days, like yesterday, when I cannot even sit up in bed. There ’s nothing for it but patience ! Fortunately I am never dull, and am perfectly cheerful, at least when I am not suffering too acutely. What do you think I am doing to pass

<sup>1</sup> *Joyful in Tribulation*, p. 29.

the time? I am learning to—whistle! My next-door neighbour whistles all sorts of airs ever so nicely, and she is teaching me the art . . . after a good many futile attempts I get quite out of breath, but that doesn't matter; it is great fun. . . .'

It was in this place of suffering that she learnt, or rather learnt afresh, 'the lesson of cheerfulness, which is no less necessary,' she says,<sup>1</sup> 'than that of submission.' Her new friend, Miss O. de J., set her the example. 'Through her Adèle, who was doubtless an apt pupil in this respect, learnt to appreciate 'the value of a bright smile in a sickroom, and the blessing of that serenity which turns despondency and sadness into wholesome contentment.' And Adèle adds: 'A genial disposition is really the outward sign of the inward grace of love and endurance, and it may be a source of strength and peace, not only to its possessor, but to a whole family circle. Gratitude blossoms into joy, and this joyful spirit overflows in steady cheerfulness, till the whole of life is transformed by this sweet influence. Happiness, indeed, is a pure ray of heavenly sun-

<sup>1</sup> *Joyful in Tribulation*, p. 31.

shine, or the earthward reflection of an unseen glory.'

We have seen this Divine Light shining in the eyes of the young invalid, and we who are well and prosperous have been cheered by its radiance.



## CHAPTER VI

### IN THE SOUTH

‘Let us make no mistake. The cleverest weavers of romance must always be the foremost pupils in the school of suffering. And without pain there is no glory. It is wise . . . to sit down and quietly reckon with this certainty.’

BISHOP BRENT.

THE quiet life at La Bergeronnette was resumed and followed its usual course, but Adèle Kamm found the inactivity very trying. She could not get accustomed to it. Her friends did their best to try to supply her with work similar to that which she had done at Leysin. ‘You have divined my longing exactly,’ she wrote to Miss M. B., ‘in offering to bring some of your friends to see me. I should be so delighted if I could be of any use to them, but I am afraid that it will only be by allowing them to have the feeling of cheering an invalid, rather than by my example; for, alas, it takes me all my time to try to live up to my own ideals! I am always fighting against

my bad tendencies, but things are very difficult sometimes. . . . I am longing for my fellow-sufferers at Leysin, and O. de J. wrote to me the other day saying she couldn't think what she was doing, enjoying herself in Paris, when there was so much to do up there. . . . These long illnesses entail a great variety of suffering, and many things, which we cannot talk about, become more and more painful as time goes on, so that you really must personally have gone through them if you want to be able to give true sympathy and comfort to these embittered, hardened, and cynical hearts. . . . It is a delicate and often a difficult ministry, but it gave me a sacred joy, which I miss here, in spite of my present happy surroundings. I learnt precious lessons from it, for, behind many an unpromising exterior, I found that a little tenderness and affection would unlock the door to a perfect treasure-house of unselfishness and loving devotion.'

Adèle Kamm felt that she had found her vocation in this personal ministry. She looked forward to taking it up in the future with renewed strength and energy, for she did not yet consider herself incurable. She thought that her illness

was a temporary trial through which she would pass, and then emerge disciplined and ready for active life. 'I am looking forward with hope,' she wrote, 'and trust that this long education will not be in vain.' At that time she did not dream that in the experience of complete helplessness and unceasing physical suffering she would find her spiritual strength renewed for activity. The future was still hidden from her eyes.

But she had to pass through many a dark hour first. She had to drain the bitter cup to the last drop, and see all her dreams of personal happiness pass away. Her doctors gave her to understand that she could never marry. In these circumstances we can only say that the strength and nobility of her character shone forth more clearly than ever.

When the winter came round again she did not return to Leysin. It was thought that a change to the south might be beneficial, and the whole family migrated thither at the beginning of February 1908. Rooms had been engaged in a hotel at Taggia, near San Remo. But the hotel proved to be badly situated, for it looked on to a dusty square, and another arrangement had to

be made. They found a furnished house at Cannet, which stood far back from the dusty road in a garden full of blossoming mimosa. Adèle bore the journey well. She was delighted to have the chance of seeing the 'Côte d'Azur.' But this visit to the south which she had anticipated with so much pleasure was doomed to be full of disappointment. Her mind had pictured lawns gay with anemones ; she had had visions of delightful times of rest under the shade of the olive-trees. But as soon as she tried to go down to the garden she became so exhausted that her pain grew worse. She saw her thirteenth doctor ! 'I go in for collecting them !' she said. Like the others he could only give one piece of advice—'Lie absolutely still.'

It was bitterly cold. The temperature was nearly down to freezing-point in the mornings. A violent south wind blew almost all the time. It was scarcely fine for as much as two or three hours in the day. Then it was difficult to heat the house. Already the young invalid sighed for La Bergeronnette and her pretty pink room, where she could at least keep warm ! At the end of March she wrote : 'My people still have to

wear winter garments indoors, and put on thick coats when they go out. I have three blankets and two thick quilts on my bed, and am always wrapped up like a mummy in a thick white shawl, and of course I have a hot-water bottle ! And I really am not a chilly mortal. At Chêne I never needed so much. But can you wonder at it when I tell you that I can see three inches of daylight between the boards of the doors, the window-frames, and the floor ! And when the wind rushes in it plays a fine tune on the carpet. . . . And this is the Sunny South . . . well, it will never see *me* here again. . . .’

Sometimes her natural high spirits got the upper hand. She found it very amusing to watch her poor father seated in an arm-chair hugging a hot-water bottle, and vainly trying to get warm ! But more often she was in a state of depression most unusual to her. She longed sometimes for the gay life which she could have enjoyed so heartily, though when her young sister went off to see the Battle of Flowers she was as delighted as if she had been going herself. Never, even when her spirits were at their lowest ebb, did she betray any sign of selfish envy. It was a great

satisfaction to her to see her family enjoying their visit, and 'having a good time.' But she could have so thoroughly enjoyed the sea-air, and the sunshine, and the flowers! It *was* trying to catch the faint echo of all this 'sheer joy of living,' and yet to be shut out from it all! She said, and how very natural it was, 'I feel quite lost when girls of my own age come to see me; I can't help feeling a little sad that I can't go about and enjoy myself as they do. It's very foolish of me, I know, but the old spirit will come up now and again, and that often when I am cheerful and under the impression that I had vanquished it long ago. It distresses me very much.' They racked their brains for ways of diverting her. A good friend from Lausanne, Mr. G. H. (who was spending the winter at Cannet for the health of one of his family), paid her a long daily visit, and read aloud *Le Commissaire Potterat*, by Benjamin Vallotton, imitating the Vaudois accent to perfection. She laughed very heartily over it. But the effect of a 'diversion,' however good it may be, is not permanent, and depression only returns and settles down more deeply than before. And, what was quite extraordinary for her, Adèle

even let her melancholy mood appear in her letters. She wrote to Miss M. B. thus :

‘LE CANNET, 21st February 1908.

‘ . . . Perhaps you will be surprised to get another letter so soon after my last one, but the days are so long that I am glad to divert my thoughts by writing, especially to you, my dear friend, on whom I depend more than any one when I am cast down, for I know that you are so brave, and have such strength of character, that the very thought of you makes me stronger too. Some people have the power of doing good even at a distance, and when they themselves know nothing about it.

‘ Well, I may as well own up—I am downright dull, and homesick for La Bergeronnette and for all my friends. You will be astonished to hear this, I am sure, seeing that I have never been dull in my life before ! I shall not be so again either, and I am more surprised and humiliated at the discovery than any one else. My cheerfulness and good spirits have stayed behind at Chêne, and I long to be back there. I fight as hard as ever I can, I pray, I read all my good books ; they

help me for a little while, and then, soon afterwards, all their power seems to have vanished.

‘Why is it, then? I am very comfortable here, I am with my own dear family. It is unpardonable, and I blame myself very much, but there are two things which help to account for it:

‘First, the want of society, which is quite as necessary to me as . . . my dreams, seeing that visitors do not tire me at all. . . . I could not have believed that I should have felt this deprivation so much, and you understand the reason as well as I do. It is not a question of the passing interest of a visit, but of that deep affection, that constant watching of all the various lives, whose joys and sorrows I knew so well that they almost became my own. And this interchange of thought and sympathy is a sort of daily nourishment which I find it very difficult to do without.

‘The second reason is a kind of disappointment and disillusionment. While people at home kept on telling me that the South would do me so much good, part of my mind refused to believe it, but another part of me, whose secret power I realise only now, took its flight into the future, giving me visions of lovely walks in groves of



olive and orange-trees, and even of a life of comparative health. I let myself dwell on it too much, and it has cost me weeks of hard spiritual conflict to regain my usual serenity of spirit, which is based on trustful and resolute submission, the only foundation for real happiness and good spirits. For some time ago I came to the conclusion that the only one way to be happy during a long illness is to allow no self-deception in any shape or form, and that means that we may harbour no illusions which may let us drop all of a sudden into a pessimism as illogical as are the illusions themselves.'

During her stay at Cannes Adèle Kamm passed through a painful crisis. Physically she suffered more and more. With redoubled violence the disease attacked first her neck, giving her intolerable pain, then the internal organs, and again her lungs. Every morning about ten o'clock ague, fever, and palpitations came on. She could not see properly, and it seemed as though a veil were stretched before her eyes. She was confined entirely to bed. Towards five o'clock her temperature dropped to normal, but it was then far too late to go out into the garden.

It was indeed trying to have taken this long journey, and then be shut up altogether in a cold, uncomfortable room with nothing to do ! For three months of her time at Cannet the poor child suffered almost without relief. And there it was that she came to realise that her sentence was final, and gave up all hope of recovery with that brave clearness of vision and stoicism so well expressed in the letter from which we have just quoted.

After so many years of suffering bravely borne, after the peaceful hours of serenity and hope at Leysin and La Bergeronnette, Adèle Kamm had reached what she calls the third stage in illness, that of 'cold reality.'

## CHAPTER VII

### A SPIRITUAL CRISIS

‘All which I took from thee I did but take,  
Not for thy harms,  
But just that thou might’st seek it in My arms.  
All which thy child’s mistake  
Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home,  
Rise, take My hand, and come.’

FRANCIS THOMPSON.

As he travels along his difficult way the invalid comes to a point where the road descends; he must go downhill for a time before making the last ascent! Now he needs all his courage. His future ‘hangs on a thread’<sup>1</sup> (to quote Adèle Kamm). He is in danger of being overwhelmed, as so many have been, by floods of bitterness and rebellion. He has come to the moment when he must face his illness with all the strength of mind he possesses, and this involves a recognition of its serious nature, and a willing acceptance of the

<sup>1</sup> *Joyful in Tribulation*, p. 41.

fact. To be true to oneself is the first step towards victory.

‘I believe,’ wrote Adèle Kamm,<sup>1</sup> ‘that uncertainty about our state of health, or those illusions which we harbour for ourselves, or are fostered by those around us, only lead to one disappointment after another ; they cause untold bitterness, and perhaps even loss of faith in others, and in ourselves. Oh, what a sad shipwreck, and how difficult it is to get afloat again ! It is much better to view our condition in as detached a manner as possible, and form our own opinion upon it. In this way we shall be saved from much disappointment, and we shall be able to plan our life with a view to *quiet usefulness*.’

‘Quiet usefulness’ ! that is Adèle Kamm all over ! It is the echo of the prayer at her first Communion which she offered continually, not with her lips, nor in any moment of sudden emotion, but by working out its answer in her daily life. ‘But,’ she asked herself, ‘how can I help others now ?’ She felt so weak. Did she not rather need help herself ? No human being could give it to her. She turned to God. And

<sup>1</sup> *Joyful in Tribulation*, p. 41.

her one petition was that He would use her in some way :

‘LE CANNET, *2nd March 1908.*

‘ . . . I have not been out of bed for a fortnight, and yesterday the doctor told me he did not think I should be able to go out often during my stay here, for every step would cost too much effort, and even getting up to sit in the sunshine would mean loss of strength, overtaxed breathing, and a relapse. I see that he is right, and just now I have no desire to budge an inch ! I am quieter and happier than I have been during the past weeks, at least I am so during the daytime, and I have recovered my inward peace and outward serenity.

‘ But the nights must be got through somehow, and they are really pretty bad ! I suffer much, and feel very weak. Then the wind which roars incessantly, and makes everything rattle, not only keeps me awake, but adds to my distress, and I have to redouble my efforts of will to wrestle through. Sometimes I am literally covered with perspiration afterwards. But then I am so pleased at having conquered that I fall asleep for a few hours at any rate.

‘Every night I wonder however people get on who do not ask God to help them through such difficult times! I can see that this month was quite necessary. I was so happy at La Bergeronnette, and so contented that trial had lost its sting. I was getting into a rut. I needed a fresh shock, and the loss of certain pleasures, to force me to throw myself more completely into the Divine Arms. Sometimes when I look back at this long road which I have travelled for some years now, I am so sorry that I cannot pass on the result of my reflections to those who do not believe. Everything is so splendidly planned, that I am often struck with amazement; each part of my discipline fits in so exactly, nothing is hurried, but plenty of time is allowed me to accept it and adjust myself without too much suffering, that I feel only a Father full of the tenderest love could act in such a delicate way. The further I go the more I understand the meaning of certain mysteries, and I learn to be grateful for the happiness which is granted me.

‘My field of usefulness seems to be more limited than ever, but I have been pondering over it a

lot lately, for there lies the way to pure joy. I have been thinking of the things I used to do which made me so happy. . . . I could then work for others with my hands, and that helps to make the days in bed seem shorter. Such little trifles are useful after all, and they are tokens of love and affection as well. What a blessing work is! But during the last few months I have been able to do nothing except write letters, and even that is difficult, for I can't sit up, and my back gets so painful from always lying on it. Writing letters seems such a little thing, and yet even that becomes tiring. But I must shake off this dreadful feeling of becoming useless.

‘I have been so depressed by it that I set myself to get rid of the idea by thinking of all the girls who were in like case, and of what they can do for others, just where they are. I have been surprised to find a good many ways. Sometimes I find it makes things clearer to think myself into some one else's circumstances! First of all there is the personal atmosphere, which may mean so much for good or for evil. Of course I knew of that before, and I do try to keep a watch over myself, though I fear there is a good deal of

egotism in this, for I love to see every one round me cheerful and happy. Then comes the gift of loving sympathy. And there is always another thing, the power of giving joy to others, to inspire courage and hope, to call forth a smile; this is a happy task, and we needn't sit up to do that! Prayer is another form of service. Those we love have so much need of remembrance, for there are so many hearts burdened by the anxieties, difficulties, and bitter experiences of life; so many who are ill, like myself, who pass through the same trials of body and spirit. These thoughts have comforted me. . . . Joy and peace have come back, and I feel that I have something to do during all the time that it may please God to keep me in this state. So I am very happy as I write to you this evening, and after these weeks of inward storm and stress, I am looking forward with joy to a time of quiet happiness.'

No eye can penetrate the sacred mystery of a deeply devout soul. I do not know the intimate secrets of the inward life of Adèle Kamm.

I do not suppose that any one does. We catch but the glowing reflection of a hidden fire. As far as I can judge from her letters, she never was



‘converted’ in the ordinary sense of the word. She does not belong, in psychological language, to the order of the ‘Twiceborn.’ We trace in her the slow religious development, apart from any violent upheaval, of a well-balanced spiritual nature. But I believe that, after the day of her first Communion, those weeks at Cannes mark the most decisive experience of her religious life. There she passed through her Gethsemane. When she had presented to God as a ‘willing sacrifice’ the ruin of her earthly hopes, and the entire destruction of her physical frame, she entered into a holy and intimate communion with Him, which might know fluctuations but would never more desert her.

In a letter written some time afterwards to her intimate friend, Miss Lily Schlumberger,<sup>1</sup> she thus refers to that critical time :

‘My last great spiritual conflict took place at Cannes, when, after a trying journey, I realised that I must remain in bed altogether, that the longed-for recovery was not to be, and when to crown everything two vertebrae began to swell, and were so painful that I had to lie on my back

<sup>1</sup> 14th February 1909.

entirely. . . . For a month I was just about as rebellious as any one could be, and I used to cry my heart out every night, till one day our clergyman sang me a beautiful hymn called "The Cross,"<sup>1</sup> which I have quoted in my booklet. These beautiful words touched me. I grew calmer as I meditated on the sufferings of Jesus Christ, which were so much greater than my own, and were borne willingly out of love to us, and especially as I thought of His sublime, glorious love on the Cross. Oh ! *how* I prayed that God would help me to accept my cross, and begin a new life of pure love to God and man. And God did answer me. I am not a bit good, not in the least what I ought to be, but these dreadful conflicts are over, and for a whole year now I have not had any of those dark times which nearly drove me to despair, when a cloud seemed to come between my soul and God.'

Towards the end of March there was a kind of lull in the storm. The disease allowed her a brief respite. She became more cheerful. Visitors came who gave her genuine pleasure. The Princesses of L. from Livonia were Protestants, and

<sup>1</sup> Hymn by O. Karre : 'It is at the Cross that the way begins.'

they had grown very much attached to her.<sup>1</sup> They often visited her. Sometimes they arranged religious gatherings in her room. 'Last Tuesday,' she wrote on the 6th of April, 'the Princesses of L. came here with the clergyman, and two other gentlemen who sang well. They sang some beautiful revival hymns together. It was glorious, and I was in the seventh heaven! Then afterwards we all took Communion in my room, which I was very glad to do, for it was so long since I had been able to go to church for that service. I shall never forget the touching appeal of the ceremony.'

If I may give my personal opinion, it seems to me that the revivalist spirit of the Princesses of L. was not really in harmony with the delicately reserved nature of Adèle Kamm. If she appeared to respond to it for a time, just when she was specially needing comfort and uplifting, I should look upon it as a passing and almost accidental phase in her life. Later on she was to find her own expression of truth along another

<sup>1</sup> 'Mr. M. has introduced me to two young Russian princesses (of the name of L.) They have become Protestants, and live with their family in the most beautiful villa here; they are models of simplicity, kindness, and fervent Christian faith.'

line altogether. Just then she had a fit of proselytising zeal, which came to an untimely end. She describes the incident herself with a quaint mixture of humour and regret.

The Kamms had at that time a maidservant, an honest soul, who was originally a native of Luchon near Lourdes. The miracles at that place seem to have affected her differently from the majority of the pilgrims. Perhaps she saw them at too close quarters ; at any rate the poor thing believed in neither God nor devil. She was very unhappy. In the goodness of her heart Adèle prayed that she might be able to comfort her. One day she was reading from the chapter containing the Beatitudes, when the maid burst into tears, and exclaimed with true southern vehemence : ‘ Oh, dear ! oh, dear ! I am so miserable ! ’ and began to pour out the whole story of her domestic woes.

Much embarrassed by this delicate situation, Adèle went on reading. Then she talked very simply about the Parable of the Good Shepherd, and thought that the poor woman seemed somewhat comforted. As she said that her sight was too poor to read the Bible in small print, Adèle

conceived the touching idea of copying out some hymns and psalms for her in large characters, in a strongly bound notebook. She had begun to write out a whole Gospel, when one day the maid came into the room, and asked her to read to her a postcard she had just received, and it then came out that she could neither read nor write, no matter how clear the type might be ! She had been ashamed to say so at first, and had thus allowed her young mistress to do all this work for nothing !

A certain kind of religious zeal was quite impossible to Adèle Kamm. She never dreamt of making this girl a Protestant. But she thought that the possession of a bound note-book without any title would be less compromising than a French Bible. Having seen her mistake, she quietly readjusted herself, and simply tried to exert an influence by her example and her kindness. 'So all my plans about X. have fallen through,' she wrote at the end of this story. 'Happily she improves every day, and this is a great joy to us all. . . . She often says that she will never forget the stay at Villa K., and her husband has offered to take me out in a rubber-

tyred invalid chair, in which I could lie down. But I cannot leave my bed.'

The time at Cannes was nearly over. They were getting ready to go back to La Bergeronnette, greatly to Adèle Kamm's satisfaction. She still found the inactivity very trying, although this quiet time had not been wasted. She had passed through a deep inward experience.

Adèle was not one of those people who spend a great deal of time in introspection, either about the state of their conscience and their hopes of salvation, or about their spiritual state and the exact nature of their relation with God. Once she had seen that her physical condition was hopeless, and had accepted it with all that it involved, including the prospect of death—which might be near—she did not look back on the wreck of all her hopes. Henceforth her one aim was to make the most of her life. And we shall see how wonderfully her activity grew in scope and intensity as her physical strength declined.

## CHAPTER VIII

### GLEAMS OF LIGHT

‘A happy man or woman is a better thing to find than a £5 note. He or she is a radiating focus of good-will: and their entrance into a room is as though another candle had been lighted.’—R. L. STEVENSON.

WITH her happy disposition and natural optimism Adèle Kamm never brooded over difficulties. Did she feel that return of hope, so often experienced by consumptive patients even when death is not far off? We think not, but would rather believe that, knowing that her condition was hopeless, she meant to make the most of any brief respite which might be granted her. Like M. Seguin’s brave little goat<sup>1</sup> when the wolf was drawing near, she ran from one side to another, eager to enjoy some fragrant morsels before lying down in her white robe to die. Between her return from Cannes and the autumn of 1908 she had some delightful hours, which she

<sup>1</sup> See *Lettres de Mon Moulin*, by Alphonse Daudet.

enjoyed with all the energy of her abundant vitality.

‘During the last two weeks,’ she wrote on the 9th of June, ‘I have had much less pain. I am still sore and throbbing all over, but I am so thankful that I feel easier. Pain no longer takes up all my attention. My mind is freer. Spirit and intellect alike feel braced and strengthened. I seem to see everything from a saner, calmer point of view. . . . These few days or weeks of respite which I enjoy from time to time help me to pull up with marvellous elasticity. Then when the bad days return I have fresh strength and courage to bear them. At Cannes I had three months of pain without a single good day ; that really was too much, but now I feel as though I can breathe again. . . .

‘No words can express how much I am enjoying life just now. . . . What a delightful feeling it is to live in the present, to enjoy everything just as it comes, to wake with the sense that a quiet day lies before me full of inward peace, freedom from anxiety and regret, and luminous with the certainty that I am in the right path.’

Adèle Kamm’s doctors, the famous surgeon of



Lausanne, Mr. R., and Dr. V. of Geneva (who also was much attached to her), were not so well satisfied with her condition as she was herself, and gave her the strictest orders about keeping still. But 'going slowly' was not at all her strong point. She loved to kick over the traces sometimes, and play tricks on the doctors. Even when these outbursts had cost her rather dear, she delighted to describe them with mischievous pleasure.

‘LA BERGERONNETTE, 5th October 1908.

‘I have tried going out of doors in an invalid-chair. All my doctors had forbidden it, but I had been so unwell during the whole of the week before that my patience got exhausted. And on Monday afternoon, to the amazement of friends and neighbours, I left my gilded cage in a comfortable little carriage, where I could partly recline, feeling as happy as a queen. What a joy it was to see the traffic, and to get another view than that from La Bergeronnette. I wasn't the least bit self-conscious, and just enjoyed the little trip to the full, though four years ago I would rather have died than appear on the Chêne Road in an invalid-chair. We went round by the

“Ermitage” on to the promenade, where I watched a wedding-party going into the church. Then I spent the whole afternoon in Mr. G.’s pretty garden, and had tea there. It was my first visit after two years. Mont Blanc looked so beautiful in the sunset.

‘All had gone well, even including the violent jerks of the chair, which I had not minded particularly. I was radiant. But—in the evening, when I was back in bed, I began to feel rather bad, and the next morning I was in much pain either from the spine, or from the lower part of the body, which looked as though I had had an injection of tuberculin.

‘But I wanted to make the experiment thoroughly, and not be a mollicoddle! So the next day, taking advantage of the fine weather, I went to the G’s., who were horror-struck when I arrived. It was such a lovely afternoon, and I look back on it with great pleasure. But it was my last expedition in the chair. For three days I have had acute pain from an open abscess, caused by the jolting on those two outings. . . .’

In spite of this vexatious experience Adèle would not give in. On the Friday, being in less

pain, she went off in a motor-car to visit some friends near Chêne, 'in order to test at once the difference between the jolting of the bath-chair and of the motor, and then see the result.' This long drive was very enjoyable, almost like a dream of the Arabian Nights! And, to add to the piquancy of the whole adventure, Dr. V., suspecting nothing, came to La Bergeronnette and found 'the cage empty and the bird flown.' As the harm was done, he thought it best to laugh at the escapade, especially as his original little patient told him quite seriously, 'I never thought I was so delicate.' However, the doctor's final verdict was this: 'You may have a short motor-drive once in three months, but there must be no more going out in the bath-chair.' 'I have definitely given up the idea of going out either on foot or in a bath-chair,' she wrote, 'and I can say that I have done so bravely and without tears, although it is a great disappointment. I have begged them to take the chair away without my knowing anything about it.'

But she had not made any promise about motoring, and had certainly not given her word to play no more tricks on the doctors. Three

months was too long for her to wait. A fortnight later some friends from Naples came to fetch her in a beautiful limousine, and carried her off for a two hours' drive. They took her through all the chief streets of Geneva. She loved the noise of traffic, the rush of life in a big town. She was taken six times over the Mont Blanc bridge. She had not seen the lake for two years. We can imagine how much she enjoyed it.

Two days later the friends from Naples came again. And what *did* they do this time? They began dancing the tarentella! The dance was at its height, when they suddenly heard the sound of a motor-horn, as threatening as the trumpet of Hernani! It was Dr. V., arriving at the usual hour. 'He came into the drawing-room,' said Adèle Kamm, 'amazed at all this upset, for we had turned up the carpet for the dance, and people and furniture crowded up the room, and overflowed on to the verandah. He had managed to get a seat somehow, when suddenly a voice exclaimed: "Time for the train!" And every one had to get up and rush off. The doctor was quite bewildered, and it was all he could do to take leave of the guests in proper style. When at

last every one had gone, and we found ourselves alone in this sudden quiet, amid all this disorder, we looked at each other, and then burst out laughing.'

But there were still more surprises in store for the doctor. He had come in a new car, which he was showing off to his patient, when the latter—impatient for the moment of all restrictions—jumped into the car, and went off for a turn with the chauffeur. When she came back she had to go straight to bed. Then followed the sounding process, accompanied by grave looks on the doctor's part. And then—what a lecture! 'Fearing a storm,' said she, 'I took his hand, and gently asked him not to be cross, as that gave me palpitations. . . . (What diplomacy!) He talked to me quite nicely and quietly, but he forbade me a great many things. I am not to go to Lausanne in a motor to see Dr. R. (Ahem!); I must not move from my invalid-chair without being lifted; I am not to raise my arms or move suddenly; in short, I am to live as though I were ninety and crippled with rheumatism. I had great difficulty in keeping my face straight, for I know that I can never carry out all that. To

look ill is worse than being ill. And Dr. V. knows that he is wasting his breath on this subject.' And, indeed, unless Adèle Kamm were literally in agony, she never allowed herself to look like an invalid.

## CHAPTER IX

### A SUMMONS TO ACTION

‘It must be that when the Lord took from me one faculty, He gave me another; which is in no way impossible. I think of the beautiful Italian proverb: “When God shuts a door He opens a window.”’—HELEN KELLER.

At the end of 1908 the disease took a more virulent form than ever before. When the doctors were asked to locate the root of the mischief, they could only reply, ‘It is everywhere.’ They were powerless, and were deeply distressed in consequence. No surgical skill could relieve her. Every part of the body suffered, the neck, back, chest, internal organs, and heart. If the pain grew easier in one place, it only became worse in another. ‘It is a regular labyrinth of threads which tug in all directions,’ said Adèle, with quiet philosophy. And when the abscesses gave her great pain, she tried to take comfort in the fact that her back was a little easier, and that she

could lie for a time on her side, a position which was generally out of the question.

During the last few days of the year the pain became unbearable. After having held out for a long time, Adèle at last consented to have an injection of morphia, but she could not stand it. The 1st of January 1909 was one of the worst days that she had ever had.

‘I have spent a dreadful New Year’s Day,’ she wrote. ‘The attack which had been coming on all through the Christmas week reached a crisis on New Year’s Day, and I could not see any one, but spent my time groaning. That was lively, wasn’t it? I thought I should have a worse attack than usual, for my nights have been so bad lately, that I have finished up regularly by crying at midnight, and you know that I do not cry easily. But the strain was too intense.’

But this same New Year’s Day, which was marked by such terrible suffering, was to bring her a great joy. There were many other similar coincidences in her life. Unexpected help would come at the very moment when it was most needed; or a difficulty, apparently insurmountable, would be cleared away in the happiest and



most unlooked-for manner. In all these circumstances Adèle Kamm traced a Divine Hand.

‘On this New Year’s Day,’ she said, ‘I realised more clearly than ever before the vast gulf which separates the physical from the spiritual realm. The former was a perfect chaos, and the latter was so happy that the contrast was striking.’ She had received a letter from Mr. H., the chaplain at Leysin, suggesting a method of carrying out one of her long-cherished desires, and of doing useful work. There was nothing she wanted more. Her thoughts were constantly occupied with those who were chronic sufferers like herself, and especially with those at Leysin. She could so well understand what they were enduring in body and mind, and she felt that she had the power to enter into their lives very fully, and to give just the right words of comfort and encouragement out of the treasure of her own spiritual experience. But how could she come into actual contact with them, now that she was so entirely cut off from the world? This was the question she had put to Mr. H. in a letter dated the 30th of December :

‘I often think of the great work you are doing

up there. My heart is overflowing with love for those who suffer, whether they be rich or poor, for they all need fellowship with others who can help and strengthen them as well as sympathise. I should so like to help you in your work. . . . But I am shut up in my room, and I can assure you, dear friend, that the only sorrow I cannot overcome is that of being unable to help these suffering ones, towards whom my heart goes out daily. But,

“If I cannot realise my ideal  
I can at least idealise my real.”<sup>1</sup>

The little writing I can do is one of the few ways left in which I can be of any use. If you should know of any friends who are ill like me, and would welcome a letter, please tell me. . . .’

And Adèle added :

‘I keep thinking of prisoners, shut up as I am, but in a cell instead of a pretty pink room, with strength instead of weakness of body, their only memory a guilty past, and with a hopeless future before them. If they do not know the Saviour,

<sup>1</sup> Adèle Kamm had these lines printed as a motto on the cover of her booklet, *Joyful in Tribulation*.

what a terrible life! If only I were strong enough to visit them! . . .’

We shall see later how Adèle Kamm found a way to send a message of love to prisoners. We shall also see how she managed to work out her idea of a Pavilion for Open-air Treatment for patients living in large towns. In his letter Mr. H. asked Adèle to put down her reflections on suffering, and to send her notes to him that he might make use of them in his ministry.<sup>1</sup> This letter was quite enough to help her to forget the terrible pain. It made her ‘wild with joy’; that is the very expression she used. She saw a radiant path opening up before her, leading out of the cavern in which she was imprisoned. It was a summons to action, and she felt that once more she had an object in life. She need no longer suffer from the painful sense of being nothing but a poor wounded soldier, laid aside as useless, and depending entirely upon others. She would now be able to do something for them. Even

<sup>1</sup> Adèle Kamm had been much touched by a little book written by a young invalid at Montreux: *To Those Who are Shut-In: The Message of an Invalid to other Sufferers*.—Lausanne, George Bridel.

*she* could make her influence felt. Feverishly she began to write, working through the long hours of sleeplessness;<sup>1</sup> and these notes, into which she poured her whole loving heart, without the least straining after literary effect, became the booklet to which we have referred more than once already.

I pity the man who reads *Joyful in Tribulation* in a critical spirit, who cannot see behind the artless simplicity of the style the radiant beauty of a soul which reveals its inmost secrets for the sake of those who have to follow the same painful course that she had already travelled, before reaching the haven of peace. And I would like to say to this ultra-refined reader, 'If ever you in your turn should be chained down to a bed of pain, take up this booklet again, and you will then appreciate its value!' It is written for sufferers first and foremost, and hundreds and even thousands of them have welcomed it eagerly as a refreshing draught to cool their spiritual thirst. It has gone as a messenger of peace into

<sup>1</sup> 'God Himself,' she wrote to a friend, 'gave me strength to write this booklet, and even dictated its language. For I wrote it at night during high fever, without any preconceived plan, just as it came.'

many a darkened room, where the body is racked with pain, and the spirit seethes with rebellion. It has brought with it a breath of heaven, and a life-giving warmth. To some, as we know, it has opened up a new life. O little book, hardly deserving the name of 'book' (what does that matter ?). How many books would I not give for you !

The booklet, *Joyful in Tribulation*, begun at a time when Adèle Kamm seemed to have reached a condition of absolute helplessness, when she would need all her strength to support the crushing weight of her own suffering, proved to be the first step on a path of redoubled activity and growing influence in all directions. Henceforth she had a powerful interest outside herself, a definite outlet for all her energy. And from the beginning she found it quite amusing (once the vexed question of literary style was settled) to learn the technical side of the profession of letters, to 'see herself in print,' to choose paper and type, to discuss business with printers, and to correct proofs ! Adèle corresponded busily with Mr. H., who helped her with his advice, while at the same

time he left her quite free to work out her ideas as she chose. The booklet is her own work right through, from the first page to the last. And not only did this enterprising little person launch out as an ' authoress,' but she was her own publisher as well, her object being to earn money that she might give the profits to the scheme for a ' Pavilion for Open-air Treatment.'<sup>1</sup> She soon displayed remarkable financial and administrative ability. We have a good many women in Switzerland who are gifted in this direction. I know one, a beautiful and attractive girl, who, at the age of twenty-two, managed a hotel at the Cape during the Boer War, when the whole country was swarming with adventurers. Adèle Kamm would have been quite equal to such a task. At the age of fifteen she would often help her mother to finish up difficult accounts. She managed her booklet so well that the profits were substantial. I told her one day that all the literary people in French Switzerland might envy her financial success !

<sup>1</sup> Adèle Kamm wished to pay the printing expenses out of her own savings. She used a small sum which she had put aside for the purchase of invalid-chairs for poor patients.

And what a pleasure it was to receive the requests which poured in from all quarters, and to see the piles of booklets disappearing at such a rate that new editions had to be ordered.<sup>1</sup> The goal had been reached at one bound. The gentle voice issuing from this sickroom was to awaken an echo in many hearts. Every post brought fresh letters from unknown correspondents ; once she had as many as fifty-seven in one week, and she made it a duty to answer each one personally. What a task for a girl whom the doctors considered to be in the last stage of disease ! But in doing this she found new strength and joy. She took on a new lease of life. Goethe liked to assert that a man cannot die until he gives his consent. Adèle Kamm did not consent to die, although she had no fear of death.<sup>2</sup> At the

<sup>1</sup> The booklet is known abroad as well as in Switzerland. A German edition has been published, with a preface by the Rev. E. Hoffet, entitled *Fröhlich im Trübsal*. Strassburger Druckerei und Verlagsanstalt, Filiale Colmar.

<sup>2</sup> Letter of 9th July 1909 to Mrs. F. G. : 'I am under no delusion on this point. I know that I have extraordinary vitality, but I am getting gradually weaker, and all I ask of God is to let me live another year or two in spite of my pain, for the sake of my dear ones, who are feeling the loss of my father very keenly. . . . I love life, I enjoy it intensely, but I also love the thought of death, of being nearer to God, of knowing at last the joy and glory of that

beginning of her illness, when her life seemed useless, and her sufferings were almost beyond endurance, she certainly did desire to be set free by death, for she was full of the sure and certain hope of immortality. But now that she felt that she had a definite work to do, she determined to live as long as she possibly could. 'As far as I am concerned,' she wrote on the 1st of April 1910 to Mr. H., 'I should be quite glad to be freed from suffering and to be with God. Nevertheless I struggle hard to remain here as long as I can, for there is so much work to do, and this makes me very happy. Above all, I must 'live for my dear mother's sake, for she would be very lonely without me. So I am taking care of myself, and I am fighting against this terrible disease as hard as I can, disputing every inch of the way, and I quite hope that the extraordinary physical vitality which characterises our family will help me to offer a prolonged resistance. But that means that I must suffer a great deal, and never leave my bed.'

So Adèle Kamm did not consent to die until

"Eternal Life" promised and realised by Christ. Life and death are alike joy to me, so my heart is confident and at peace.'



she could literally hold out no longer. For more than two years yet she was to live and work with renewed energy, in spite of the fact that according to all the well-established laws of medical science it was impossible for her to be alive at all.

## CHAPTER X

### A WIDENING CIRCLE

‘Joy is a most contagious catching thing. But of all joys, joy in the midst of trouble . . . nothing persuades the world of the reality of religion more than the deep rest it brings to the believing heart. A mind at perfect peace—that is the mystery of Christian living, that is the secret of communion with God.’—BARBOUR.

THE inward life of Adèle Kamm came to its full development in the year 1909, and her character ripened in a most beautiful way. It was also the most active period of her life. A little while before her death she said: ‘That was the happiest year of my life.’ Nevertheless, as we shall see, it proved the beginning of a period of yet more painful limitation—that of entire confinement to bed. In the early part of this year she passed into the shadow of a great sorrow, for on the 22nd of February 1909 her father, then aged eighty-four, died after an attack of apoplexy. Adèle was deeply attached to him, and the bond which united father and child was

very close and tender. It was his delight to instruct her in mathematics, for Adèle was a very apt pupil. He had also taken the keenest interest in her little book, *Joyful in Tribulation*.<sup>1</sup>

After her father's death Adèle felt an increased sense of responsibility. One of her intimate friends told me that from that moment her character deepened visibly. At one bound the young girl, accustomed to depend on the sheltering affection of others, leapt into womanhood. A certain disciplined maturity added dignity to her natural charm, while with loving wisdom she

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Mrs. F. G., 29th July 1909: 'All the work connected with my little book had to be done last spring when I was so ill, besides being terribly shaken by the death of my dear father; he passed away after an attack of apoplexy, and I was only able to see him twice before he died. This little book was my father's last real pleasure; he only saw it in manuscript, but he helped me so much by his encouraging advice and sympathy.'

Out of respect to her father's memory Adèle Kamm refused to make any corrections in the MS. which he had read through with her. Her friends at Leysin particularly wished her to leave out the following passage: 'This is one of the most beautiful things I have ever seen: two hundred people living together for a whole winter in absolute harmony, free from gossip and scandal or any kind of disagreement—the spirit of friendship binding all into one large family.'

Adèle Kamm was certainly mistaken on this point. In her quiet room peace and charity reigned supreme; but otherwise the sanatorium life went on as before, excepting that her presence was an additional influence for good.

guided and encouraged all who came into touch with her. She exercised this growing influence with so much delicate tact that no one could possibly resent it. The young invalid was now in a position to give a hundred times more than she received.

Her own family came first, for she did not belong to the class of people who reserve their gracious manners for the outside world. She began her ministry of joy among those whom she loved best, and upon them she lavished the tenderest and most delicate affection. In all the small difficulties of daily life she tried to make things run smoothly, until little by little her contented, happy spirit infected the whole family. She did not wish her illness to prevent her younger sister from enjoying herself; indeed, she was quite anxious to see her sharing in all the innocent gaiety of girls of her age, and her solicitude was quite maternal. As for her mother, who during this long illness nursed her with unbounded tenderness and devotion, Adèle's one thought was to save her as much trouble as possible. Gradually she succeeded in leading her dear ones along the same path that she herself had trodden, from

anguish and rebellion to submission, and from submission to joy. No incurable invalid ever had a happier home circle.

She had the same gracious welcome for all, and made no distinction of class or creed. The necessity for looking the essential facts of life and death in the face had placed her above all that was petty and small in her daily life. Among her most frequent visitors were a Roman Catholic lady-doctor and a well-known Agnostic. The latter came twice a week to give Adèle a zoology lesson. But it would seem that the positions were reversed, and as far as spiritual things were concerned the pupil became the teacher. 'On Saturday,' she wrote in January 1909, 'Mr. X. happened to be here at the same time as one of my friends, who had asked me to read my little book<sup>1</sup> aloud to her, which I did in fear and trembling, not daring to look at Mr. X., who was sitting at one end of the sofa. When I had finished reading (I was secretly surprised that he had not interrupted me) I looked up . . . and you may imagine my astonishment when I tell you that both Mrs. G. and Mr. X. were too

<sup>1</sup> *Joyful in Tribulation.*

much affected to speak! . . . When Mrs. G. had left he came up to me, took both my hands in his, and said, "You write beautifully, but I do not wish you to overtire yourself; you ought not to copy all that out just now. I wonder whether . . . you would mind . . . letting *me* copy out those pages for Leysin. . . ." I was deeply touched, and all day long I kept on repeating in my heart, "Thank God for this change in Mr. X.!" Of course he is not yet a believer, but at least he has learnt that real religion is a thing of living significance, and he respects it in consequence. And that is more than I had dared to expect. . . . Some days later Mr. X. came back with a most beautifully written copy. And he read it all through to me, even the hymn :

"It is at the Cross that the way begins . . ."

It is indeed a delightful scene, and one which breathes an atmosphere of unconscious dignity and elevation of character.

The little book, *Joyful in Tribulation*, roused a widespread feeling of interest in the brave young invalid. All over Switzerland people were stirred by an eager desire to know her personally. Letters

and visitors from near and far began to pour into La Bergeronnette, and it was a wonder that the admiration and praise which every one lavished upon her, and the public rôle which she was more and more called upon to play, did not affect her character. It was very dangerous for a young girl to attract so much attention, especially as many of her visitors were clergymen, who looked upon her as a remarkable 'case,' and held her up as an example to others. It was indeed the greatest moral danger which had threatened her. The slightest shade of unreality would have ruined for ever the influence of this splendid life !

She certainly did not suffer from lack of good advice ! People were constantly admonishing her thus : ' My child, be a modest girl ; take care that you do not become vain ! . . . May God keep you from the sin of pride, and preserve you in true Christian humility ! ' . . . More than once the poor girl cried bitterly about it.

On every hand she heard the words, repeated in varying tones of warning and reproof, ' Humility, humiliation . . . freedom from pride and vanity.'

' These words,' she wrote to Mr. H., ' and

above all what they imply, are beginning to hurt me very much indeed. Please tell me frankly if people really think I am proud and vain! Perhaps I am a little unwise in letting people see how pleased I am about this work, but that surely cannot be wrong, for God knows that it costs me a great deal, and that I do it gladly for love of Him. . . . But I do find it so difficult to hide my feelings.

‘I am only sorry that people cannot read my inmost thoughts; they would then see how free I am from pride and self-sufficiency. Sometimes the thought of my imperfections and shortcomings almost drives me to despair! That is why I admire and appreciate all my visitors, even the Agnostics, because I feel that they are better than I am. It is this feeling which makes me shrink from doing anything that is not quite usual. For some time I hesitated about writing my little book lest I should seem to be setting myself up as an example; and even after I had begun it, more than once I laid down my pen and felt as though I could not go on. It is just because I am humble that I have dared to write down the story of my feelings, my struggles, my revolts, and the pro-



gress which I made under the influence of God and my friends, and not by my own strength. You will understand that it cuts me to the quick when I hear that some of my friends are dubious about me ; perhaps only God and those nearest me know my real spiritual state.'

Over and over again, to various correspondents, she dilated upon the embarrassment she felt in being almost forced into a public life. The unexpected success of her booklet overwhelmed her. She would often exclaim, ' Oh, how I should like to hide myself and become a private individual once more ! ' But she was sustained by the conviction that she had not chosen this work for herself, but that God had given it to her ; and her sense of vocation deepened as she found that He enabled her to fulfil her ministry in spite of extreme and sometimes prostrating physical weakness.

In November 1909 the vertebrae of her neck were so badly affected that she thought that she would have to give up writing altogether. The following letter on this subject to Mr. H. expresses nothing but the most joyful submission :

*'21st November 1909.*

' . . . God has lavished upon me such a multitude of utterly unmerited blessings; He has turned every hour of my affliction into such deep pure joy that I feel absolutely ready to accept whatever He sends in a spirit of quiet confidence. He gave me the power to write in the first instance, and if He takes it away from me it only means that He does not wish me to continue this sweet and precious ministry. Or, perhaps, it may be that He has heard the secret sigh of my heart. You know that I am very happy, and yet sometimes my spirit faints within me, for I am finding the burden of popularity almost too heavy for me to bear. I am for ever being torn between the joy of working for God in the sweet ministry of consolation, and the desire to retire into privacy, and live in quiet communion with God. I feel that if I can no longer write it will be a great blessing which God has sent me, and I await it with confidence.'

This 'popularity,' which often tried her spirit, only increased as time went on. When her family actually settled down in Geneva, there was such an influx of visitors that sometimes her room was

never empty from nine in the morning till seven at night ! Adèle Kamm's tact never deserted her, though on some days she would have several visitors at the same time who belonged to very different circles of society, and who held widely divergent opinions. She knew exactly how to choose the fitting word for each, and how to avoid awkward subjects of conversation.

I said to her one day : ' Do you not find all this work very exhausting ? ' ' Never,' she answered, ' I need it. It is my life, though if I do any little unimportant thing, just for myself, I am tired out in a few minutes. But I must confess that I would like to have a little more time for meditation and prayer. At present solitude is impossible excepting at night, when the pain is bad and keeps me awake. Otherwise I sleep perfectly well. I am not at all a nervous person. . . . ' Her doctors did not agree with her on the last point, and this used to vex her. ' If she had not had a nervous temperament,' said one of them to me, ' she would have died long ago. She could not have lived through those long attacks of fever when the only nourishment she could take was less than a glass of milk a day.'

So I suppose that we must conclude that she had a nervous temperament, but that by steady self-control she turned it into a servant instead of an enemy. She could throw herself so blindly into a scheme as to lose all sense of proportion. For the time being she would literally see nothing else ! If she had been self-centred or introspective, she could just as easily have suffered from a violent reaction in the opposite direction ; she might have given way to profound depression when her hopes were disappointed, or when the burden of the suffering of others became too heavy for her to bear. But she did not do so. She was always strong and self-contained. She possessed a strong will and a simple faith, and this combination made her a powerful influence for good.

## CHAPTER XI

LOUISE DEVENOGE

‘It is Love which has a passion for giving, for ministry, for service. . . . Life, real, free, irrepressible, bursts into action, has its very being in bestowment from its own fullness.’—FAIRBAIRN.

As time went on Adèle Kamm’s doctors insisted more and more strongly on the necessity for absolute rest. When the fine weather returned this enforced inactivity tried her greatly. ‘I have been rather low-spirited lately,’ she wrote to Mr. H. in May 1909, ‘but it is all right again now. Every spring I let myself mope for a fortnight! When the warm days come, and I know that the outside world is full of singing and of bursting buds and new life, I feel my weakness more than ever, and an almost irresistible longing comes over me to get up and go out, and move about freely! For the last fortnight I have been somewhat out of tune. But that is over, and I am quite happy and serene.’

She had been obliged to give up going down to the garden ; and as it was difficult to give her the requisite care in the country, the family moved into Geneva, to a comfortable flat in the upper part of the new municipal buildings of Eaux-Vives (a suburb of the city), where Adèle could have a sunny room looking out over the Pré l'Evêque.

The journey from La Bergeronnette to her new home was made by ambulance. It was very painful, and Adèle arrived feeling thoroughly weary and ill. But she was delighted with her pretty pink room, which was very bright and cheerful, and still more with the verandah which opened out of it ; this was so gay with flowers that it looked like a veritable hanging garden ! On warm afternoons she could be wheeled in there on a movable bed. Certainly the Pré l'Evêque is no longer what it used to be—a green meadow encircled by giant elm-trees. The elms have either been cut down to make way for stiff avenues, or else they have been so clipped and pruned that they look like maimed beggars raising their stumps to heaven in despair ! And all around this open space are gloomy and pre-tentious-looking houses. But Adèle did not

appear to notice these blots on the landscape. She was not hypercritical in æsthetic matters ; illness alone compelled her to lead the life of a recluse. Her natural aspirations were all directed towards the life of action and command.

‘ During the four years we spent in the country,’ she wrote on the 14th of August 1909, ‘ I was out of everything, and since we moved here in May I seem to have come back to civilisation, and I am enjoying it immensely ! ’ From her window she never tired of watching the rush of traffic in the street below, or of listening to the mighty hum of the life of the city. The constant rumble of passing tramcars, motors, and wagons did not annoy her in the least. She loved to catch the distant echo of popular rejoicings. The following year, when the great Musical Festival was held, she was delighted with the sound of the trumpets, which floated up to her from afar. But at night a noisy crowd streamed out on to the Square, and drunken cries and snatches of ribald songs were wafted into her quiet room, over which a holy peace was always brooding. Instinctively her pure spirit shrank from the unaccustomed sounds of evil revelry ; to her it was the painful

reminder of an unknown world, a world of sin and shame. 'During this Musical Festival,' she wrote on the 20th of August, 'there has been such an outbreak of drunkenness that the streets of Geneva have resounded all night long with wild beast shouts and cries. . . . When the bells began to ring on Sunday morning, filling the air with their clear and joyful melody, a melody which harmonised so exquisitely with the beauty of the summer morning, and with the purest aspirations of the soul, I was almost overwhelmed by the sense of the havoc made by sin.'

Adèle Kamm spent a few radiantly happy afternoons upon her verandah, but this pleasure was of brief duration. She soon became seriously ill, and was obliged to remain altogether in her room, and in bed. She accepted this fresh deprivation without a murmur. Nevertheless it cost her a great deal. She wrote thus on the 14th of August 1909: 'I could not have believed that it would have made things so difficult, or that fresh air was such a necessity both for body and mind! For a fortnight I had been carried each morning on to the flowery verandah which adjoins my room, and it was such a delicious rest



and relief! . . . But I have not been able to continue this practice. The fact that the disease has broken out more violently than ever, accompanied by high fever, shows me that Adèle Kamm ought to be in her bed and in her room instead of lying out among the flowers! . . . It has been rather a hard lesson, but I have accepted it, and now I am enjoying that delightful sense of repose which is the fruit of spiritual victory!’

At that time she was tormented by constant pain in the neck, so much so that she could no longer bear the weight of her head. As she had trouble in swallowing, a specialist examined her and discovered that a diseased bone was piercing through the flesh. Some way of supporting the head had to be found, and with a good deal of difficulty a plaster impression was taken, and in November a kind of celluloid support was made to cover the neck and shoulders. She could not bear this instrument for very long. While she wore it she used to be propped up in a half-sitting position. Though her head was motionless upon the pillows, she looked as bright and sweet as usual, and her restless dark eyes gave her face a great deal of animation.

She was radiantly happy now, for a new field of usefulness had just opened up before her, which provided an outlet for all her energies. We have seen that her thoughts went out constantly to all incurable sufferers, and that she corresponded regularly with many of them. The number of those who depended on her was constantly increasing. When she grew worse she feared that she would have to give up the attempt to answer (in the way she wished to do) all the letters she received, some of which were from entire strangers. The day that she was moved to the flat in Eaux-Vives she had a letter from Miss Louise Devenoge, suggesting that she should start a society for invalids similar to those existing in the United States.

The name of Louise Devenoge should not be separated from that of Adèle Kamm. The Society of the 'Coccinelles' is their united enterprise. They died within two days of each other,<sup>1</sup> leaving behind them the same courageous example. The circumstances of their lives were

<sup>1</sup> Louise Devenoge died on the 16th of March 1911, on the day of Adèle Kamm's funeral. The two young invalids, who had done so much for the same object, met only once. Louise Devenoge was on one occasion carried to the Mairie des Eaux-Vives.

very similar, excepting that Louise Devenoge had to fight against poverty as well as against disease. She was born at Geneva on the 15th of June 1877, in humble circumstances, and she lost her mother when she was only three years old. She was a delicate child, who did not receive the care she required. She never knew the tenderness which her affectionate nature needed ; so her childhood and girlhood passed by in an atmosphere of grey monotony. She picked up a meagre education at an elementary school, where her attendance was irregular, owing to her fragile health. As soon as she left she was apprenticed to a waistcoat-maker. Unfortunately, her mistress thought she was lazy, and urged her on when she was really suffering from exhaustion. When at last they realised that she was ill, she was sent to the Dollfus Hospital at Cannes. Later on she was boarded out with peasant families at Pressy, Choulex, and in the Canton of Vaud. For some time she was under treatment in the hospitals of Geneva and Lausanne. Both legs were paralysed, and finally she was pronounced incurable.

Instead of retarding her inward progress, suffering only seemed to refine her character and in-

tensify her spiritual vigour. We are told that she had large intelligent dark eyes, a trifle restless in expression, which shone out strangely in her pale, thin face. Her religious life was deepened by the courageous manner in which she accepted her affliction. Intelligent above the average, she developed her powers of mind by reading and reflection, as well as by thoughtful conversation with the clergymen and other educated people who visited her. She had heard of the Hospital for Cripple Children, founded by Dr. Edward Martin at Pinchat, and she asked to be received as a patient, although she was then more than twenty years of age. There she spent the best years of her life. From her bed, which was placed at an angle of the large ward, she could see the whole room; from that point of vantage she was able to act as elder sister to the little patients; she devoted herself entirely to their interests, keeping them happily employed for hours together, either in learning hymns and poems, or in various kinds of handiwork. Thanks to her influence a very happy spirit prevailed in the Home, and the sense that she was actively and usefully employed cheered her greatly.

When her helplessness increased, and she needed more attention than they could give her in a Children's Hospital, she was taken to Dr. Martin's Private Nursing Home at Champel. The last years of her life were spent there. Practically every patient came under the spell of her influence.<sup>1</sup> Her strong brave spirit was a lasting inspiration, and her whole life was a silent sermon on patience and submission. 'She was never selfish,' wrote one of her friends; 'in her weakness she was always thinking of what she could do for others. I used to admire the way she would manage to make little articles of needlework, though the effort tired her very much. It is not exactly easy to sew when you cannot move your head, and when it tumbles about in all directions

<sup>1</sup> After her death one of her fellow-sufferers paid her the following tribute: 'When I became ill myself I found the first rays of comfort, and later on a constant support, in Louise's wonderful patience and serenity. For nine years her love was always the same, ready to enfold me in its healing warmth on bad and good days alike. I can never express what I owe to her . . . she has opened my eyes to so much. . . .'

Mr. Arthur Massé, a member of the Society of the 'Coccinelles,' wrote an article on Louise Devenoge in the *Semaine Religieuse* of the 25th of March 1911. 'She had only one idea,' wrote Mr. Massé, 'to do all in her power to comfort the sick, and to help them to accept their suffering in that spirit of submission of which she was a living witness, through a life of unusual trial and pain.'

unless it is propped up. . . . I would often find her in a most critical position, her head having rolled off the pillow. She just waited patiently until some one came to her aid. . . . In this condition of complete helplessness she had learnt to be content with her lot, and she was always cheerful, though she knew that there was no hope of recovery for her. She mapped out her time in such a way that each hour was usefully employed—that is to say, when she had sufficient respite from pain. . . .’

Louise Devenoge was just the person to work with Adèle Kamm. In action she also had found not only strength to bear her own suffering, but power to transform it into blessing both for herself and for others. Her energy was wonderful. When she lost the use of her right hand she learnt to write with her left, and carried on her work to the last. She taught herself English, and used to read regularly the magazine issued by an Invalids’ Union in America. It was this which suggested to her mind the thought of starting a similar society in Switzerland. Adèle Kamm took up the idea with enthusiasm, and this new interest intensified her joy in life. With her

usual promptitude and decision she at once began to work it out, but she made it quite clear that Louise Devenoge was the real founder of the new society. At its inception she wrote to her, in the first circular letter of the 'Coccinelles,' in the following terms : ' I want the first message in this paper to be addressed to you, that I may express to you, in the name of all present and future members of the Society of the "Coccinelles," our deep gratitude for this work of love which has issued from your sickroom ; especially do we appreciate your spirit of absolute understanding of the inward trials of your invalid sisters.'

## CHAPTER XII

### THE SOCIETY OF THE 'COCCINELLES'

'Whatever multiplies the bonds which attach man to man makes him better and happier.'—**JOUBERT.**

IN addition to physical suffering and inward conflicts, invalids are often oppressed by a sense of ineffectiveness and uselessness, which is caused by their inability to enter into ordinary life. They are shut away from the world in a room which may become almost a prison, unless they have some resource which will inspire them with a definite, healthy interest in life. However lovingly they may be tended, those who nurse them are often incapable of understanding them properly, because they have never passed through the same experiences. If only they could have fellowship with other sufferers who have gone through the same difficulties, and who have to fight the same daily battle! It was the sense of this need that led Adèle Kamm, with the help of Louise Devenoge, to form the Society of the



'Coccinelles.'<sup>1</sup> Her aim was to bind together into one sacred fellowship all lonely sufferers, recognising no distinctions of age or sex, class or creed. This association, whose members, in the nature of things, could never see each other, prospered from the outset. When Adèle died there were already a hundred members,<sup>2</sup> who lived in the principal towns of French Switzerland and at Berne. Adèle Kamm formed them into branches, each branch having a membership of ten. The method of intercourse is very simple : a circular letter is sent by post from one home to another, and each member adds his or her thoughts or feelings, accounts of inward struggles, records of spiritual experience, or quotations from books. A spirit of friendly intimacy springs up among the members, and personal relationships are formed between those who feel specially drawn to each other. In this way they emerge from their isolation ; and this, in itself, is a great blessing ; to some it has proved the beginning of a new spiritual era.

<sup>1</sup> Ladybirds.

<sup>2</sup> The membership has increased since then, for the Society is still in a flourishing condition.

Adèle Kamm was no mere visionary enthusiast. She was a capable and intelligent girl. Her mind was clear and practical, her mental grasp of the realities of life was altogether remarkable under the circumstances, and she was pre-eminently a good organiser. I used to see in her a parallel to the notable women saints of the Roman Catholic Church (those who founded Orders), but I never dared to say so, even in fun, for her extreme modesty would have been distressed by such a comparison. Was she not after all the 'Mother Superior' of the Lay Order of the 'Coccinelles,' the life and soul of the large family she had formed, and which she inspired with her own courage? She exercised her authority with gentle firmness. She was indefatigable; each branch had its own secretary, who, in her turn, corresponded with Adèle Kamm, and received written instructions from her, which were models of clearness and precision. She belonged to every group, and wrote in each circular letter, trying to give real spiritual guidance to the members by encouraging them in a way which was all the more valuable in that it sprang out of her own experience, and had been tested in her own life.

The Society of the 'Coccinelles' bears the indelible impression of Adèle Kamm's personality. She has breathed into it an atmosphere of love and intimacy, whereas a similar Association in America (which has a large membership) issues an important subscription list and a printed magazine. However, Adèle felt strongly that all the proceedings of her Society should be kept as private as possible. It is with some hesitation that I mention those modest 'Coccinelles,' who would perhaps prefer to remain concealed among the grass and the flowers, like the cricket in the fable. I am sure that they will forgive me, knowing that I cannot give an accurate picture of their leader without speaking of them. It is impossible to pass over such an important part of her work, for it is more especially where she gives herself so freely that she is seen at her best. I may add that she herself (making an exception in my favour to a rule which she had laid down for the general good of the Society) lent me some of the circular letters, which she thought would give me the best conception of the aims of the Union, and of the spirit in which it was carried on.

This spirit is everywhere the same, not that of

sad and passive resignation, but of active courage. There is always the underlying thought of giving the invalids the idea that they could still be useful. 'Have we any right to give way to self-pity, or to envy the activity of others,' she would say to them, 'to regard our lives as blighted, or as burdensome and useless ?'

She speaks to sufferers with the tact and insight born of personal experience. She knows their inward need, she understands their suffering. She enters into detailed descriptions of their long inactive days, of their weary sleepless nights, of little private difficulties unknown to the well and strong, and, above all, that sense of dependence which is so hard to bear. It is evident that she had an extraordinary gift of sympathy ; she seems to have known exactly how to get 'alongside' others, and to give them the fitting word of comfort. In order to avoid discouraging any one, she tried not to make herself out stronger than she was. She freely acknowledged her moments of weakness ; she almost gives us the impression that she was glad to emphasise them ! On the 21st of July 1910 she writes : 'I have gone through a great many struggles lately, arising out

of physical weakness ; I mean moods of unreasonable elation or depression, when I either felt like crying for nothing, or else was so extravagantly happy that it was almost like heaven on earth !' She also confesses her spiritual lapses. We shall see this later on, when we gather up the various precious glimpses which she gives of her own religious experience. After all, what do defeat, pain, and distress matter ? Difficulties are there to be faced and overcome ! Life assumes a different aspect when met in this spirit ; a new light dawns, and the invalid enters into a different relation with those around him. He realises that new powers of pure love have been born within his soul. 'For the invalid who has understood his mission,' said Adèle Kamm, 'the longer and more painful his trial the more wonderfully will his sympathy for his brothers and sisters in affliction be enriched and deepened. . . .'

All sorts of answers reached her ; sometimes the poor handwriting was very shaky and painfully contorted. Some of the letters were beautiful, some were naïve, all were touching. Adèle Kamm received each one with the same loving welcome. 'Brother Sparrow may sing in the birds' concert

as well as any one else,' she would say in her pretty playful way. And so the circular letters went out on their mission, to be received with eager delight, for their message was one of inspiration, saying to the weary, 'Courage! you are not alone!' In spite of the great variety of character, education, and opinion represented, we feel that the whole is welded into a spiritual unity under the watchful direction of one mind. And when we know whose mind this was, we understand Emerson's meaning when he says: 'Communion . . . I mean that spirit of living fellowship by which the purest souls attract the humbler and weaker, and lead them up to a higher level; this is a fountain of vital energy of the most powerful order.'

In her messages to the 'Coccinelles' Adèle Kamm expressed her opinions on religion and Christianity with the ardent sincerity of a conviction won by experience. But she never tried to force them upon others, and she had no desire to propagate any special ecclesiastical views. The religious basis of the Invalids' Union was of a strictly neutral character. In point of fact I believe that the majority of the members were

Protestant ; but the same welcome was extended to Roman Catholics, Jews, and Agnostics. Adèle Kamm exerted all her authority to uphold this principle, and with the consent of the Secretary of each branch she inserted in every circular letter repeated and definite explanations of this point. Every Sunday the members were asked to read certain chosen portions of the Bible, and to pray for one another, but it was expressly stipulated that Agnostics need not fall in with this arrangement.

The vigilance of the Mother Superior never relaxed. She would not allow it to become the monopoly of any one sect. Conciliatory in every other respect, on this point she was immovable. She did not agree with those who believed in Faith-healing. She admitted that this particular tenet was useful for those who found comfort in it, but she would not allow a dogma to be forced upon her (or upon those whom she loved) which did not tally with her own experience. 'I do not doubt,' she wrote on the 27th of November to Mrs. F. G., 'that God can heal us, but if He does not do so He is only acting for our highest good, and, personally, I cannot understand this

terrible struggle which destroys all the spiritual peace and blessing flowing from the entire acceptance of the will of God. Thus, as my prayers, and those of my family, have not been answered, we have accepted the situation, and in doing so we have found wonderful compensations. I tear up all the tracts on Faith-healing which are sent to me, for I am firmly convinced that God will not allow me to suffer in vain, and I know only too well that I have so much yet to learn that recovery would not be good for me.'

On the 8th of June 1910 she wrote again : 'I am having a regular controversy just now with all the prayer unions in Switzerland and in England which pray for physical healing, and for mine in particular. My little book has comforted all those who trust God in trouble, but it has given offence to all who cannot see God's hand in trial and sickness, and who, in consequence, do not submit to Him. I am bombarded with letters and tracts which are intended to convert me ! . . . They do not come from ordinary Faith-healing folk only, but even from this new sect in America ! I cannot help smiling as I write my decided refusals, for my peace and joy are so firmly estab-



lished, and my opinions likewise, that I cannot help resisting these attacks with all the energy I possess, though sometimes they really are very amusing!! However, I dread their effect on certain invalids, whose convictions are not yet quite settled, and who run the risk of losing their peace and confidence in a constant mental conflict. On the other hand I know that some sufferers may find in this form of piety all the peace and happiness they require. The human mind is so mysterious, so infinitely varied in character, that it is not easy to do good in this delicate spiritual sphere; perhaps it is just there that I see most clearly the presence of the Divine Spirit in that inspiration which leads us to choose exactly the right words of cheer and encouragement for hundreds of needy souls. It is still more wonderful when we reflect that each individual soul holds a different opinion, and that these opinions are being constantly modified, to such an extent that no one could ever be sure of striking the right chord unaided!'

We shall see that this spirit of tolerance, or rather this gift of sympathetic understanding with all who differed from her in opinion, only

grew larger and deeper as time went on. One thing however tried her sorely, and that was conventional religious phraseology! She found it hard to bear with people whose piety wore a melancholy aspect. She actually accused herself of 'sin' in her impatience in this respect. And if, in her letters, she occasionally expresses her religious ideas in somewhat conventional language it is simply due to inexperience. More and more she managed to free herself from those phrases which cast a shadow over the radiant beauty of the inward life. Her naturally high spirits kept her mind sane and vigorous. Her letters to invalids are often very amusing, and breathe a delightful sense of humour. Would you like an example? Well, here is the memorable story of the rat, as she related it to Mrs. F. G. :

*'20th August 1909.*

' . . . Yesterday evening a frightful noise nearly made us jump out of our skins! We had just settled down in my room to read and work by the light of the electric lamp . . . it was such an awful crash that mother and Henrietta simply flew to the drawing-room to see what had

happened . . . and . . . oh, horrors! . . . that big and valuable picture of the Villa Tivoli, which covered a large part of the wall, lay on the floor . . . broken right in two! The lamps on the piano were smashed, picture-frames and ornaments were shattered to atoms. . . . Whatever was it? The picture-cord was cut right through, although it was very strong and thick, yet there were no signs of wear, and as this gave way suddenly, down came this big heavy picture upsetting and breaking everything in its way! And who was the evil-doer? . . . A rat! Yes, my dear friend, I mean what I say, a rat, a dreadful, horrible RAT!!! Some days ago we had found little heaps of sawdust, which made us fear that somehow a rat had managed to get into our well-ordered household. It was the first time in her life that Mother had ever had to deal with such creatures, so she put down poison in the passages and in all the cupboards. But what else could she do? Well, the naughty beast took up his abode in our piano! in that beautiful instrument on which I used to practise, and which I value so much. My sister had gone into the room a few minutes before to try over a song, and this frightened the animal,

who in his excitement climbed up behind the picture, and in anger he bit the cord clean in two just after my sister had left the room ! If she had stayed a few minutes longer she must have been killed ; and the thought of her narrow escape has comforted us amid all this upset ! But what a shock it has been !! Mother and Henrietta have gone into Savoy this afternoon to calm their nerves ! I am delighted for them to have this little outing, for the day had really been too full of excitement ! ’

She used to write gaily to the ‘Coccinelles’ about anything which she thought might interest or divert them. She encouraged them to write about everything that affected their lives, as well as their reflections on life and suffering. Her one aim was to establish loving bonds of intimacy between the members of the spiritual family she had brought into being. She wanted each one to enter as fully as possible into the lives of the others, and through this interchange of thought and sympathy to radiate courage and joy. ‘Joy is a duty’ was her inspiring motto. And the following quotation admirably expresses what she had discovered, both for herself and for others,

of the blessing concealed in suffering. (It has been copied out by one of the members of the Invalids' Union <sup>1</sup>):

'Often when I am carving a block of marble,' said a sculptor one day, 'and when I see the chips flying in all directions, I feel a kind of compassion for the stone, and I try to comfort it by saying, "Yes, I am wounding and hurting you now, but my purpose is to fashion you into a thing of eternal beauty." There is One who is a greater Sculptor than I, greater than Michael Angelo, or Phidias—God. Humanity is His marble . . . pain is His chisel . . . and when I pass through suffering, and see the way in which sorrow shatters my most lovely dreams, I softly murmur, "God Himself is at work in my soul, and in His infinite mercy He is about to enrich and deepen my life far beyond my own imaginings! I thank Thee, my God!"'

<sup>1</sup> We cannot trace the author. In his lines on the death of his daughter Alexander Vinet expresses the same thought:

'Under Thy chisel, Divine Sculptor of my soul,  
Let all my happiness fly into fragments.'

## CHAPTER XIII

### DISTANT FRIENDS

‘We cannot make relationships too spiritual. We cannot be too careful to see them in God, and God in them.’—  
FORBES ROBINSON.

THE ruling passion of Adèle Kamm’s secluded life was friendship. To her it was ever a source of the purest joy. It would seem as though those who have been refined by suffering are better fitted for pure spiritual fellowship than others. Their inward life becomes more intense as their physical strength declines, and the material veil woven by much activity is rent and destroyed. They learn to apprehend subtle spiritual realities, which are hidden from the strong and active. We might almost fancy that they are endowed with a special gift of discernment which leads them to discover by intuition the deepest feelings of those they love. If they are not self-centred their sympathy becomes exquisitely delicate, and leads them into regions where they experience

joys so intense as to compensate them for the pleasures from which ill-health has debarred them.

Adèle Kamm had not seen the intimate friend, whose example had taught her the infinite value of cheerfulness,<sup>1</sup> since her second visit to Leysin. But when Miss O. de J. was staying at Aix-les-Bains she came over to see Adèle for a few hours. This visit was a great joy ; Adèle wrote to Mr. H. about it afterwards in the following terms :

‘ . . . I have had such a treat lately . . . a visit from O. de J. We found that the spiritual bond between us was as strong as ever, and that we were in absolute harmony with each other. It all seemed so natural that we said nothing whatever about it until the evening, when, as we looked up into the starlit sky, we fell into a conversation which I shall never forget. . . . The things which are unseen and eternal alone seemed real and vivid. . . . We became conscious of perfect spiritual union. Oh, it was a beautiful experience, so quietly, gloriously solemn ! . . . Suddenly we seemed to realise the progress we had made during the two years of separation. At Leysin such a talk would have been impossible,

<sup>1</sup> Chapter v. pp. 31 and following.

and this discovery almost overwhelmed us. But what was more wonderful still, we found that we had both developed along the same lines. . . . We met each other at the same point on the road, speaking the same language, and this after two years of wholly different experiences. *My* progress, of course, was explained by my illness, but O.'s case was very different. We were both reminded of the words of the psalmist : "The way of the Lord is perfect." O. has become a veritable fountain of peace, tranquillity, and joy. Since she was here I have been under the spell of a new influence which flows from her unconsciously, and can only be explained by the fact that she has won complete self-mastery, and has passed through a great inward change. . . . She has *willingly* taken the course into which I have been *forced* by illness, and this path has led us both into perfect peace and joy. This evening has been the most beautiful we have ever spent. It is just what I meant when I wrote in my little book :<sup>1</sup> "What can be more beautiful than the union of two souls who are both aiming at a high ideal ?" God Himself has blessed our union ; it is all His

<sup>1</sup> Speaking of Miss O. de J.



doing, and our hearts are overflowing with gratitude. Silently we gazed at the stars, but the whole atmosphere seemed to vibrate with songs of gladness and heavenly joy.'

Adèle Kamm had several intimate friends, chronic invalids like herself, whom she could never meet. She filled her room with their photographs. If any of their relations came to see her she would inquire minutely into all the circumstances of their lives. She even liked to know the colour of their eyes, in order that she might make an accurate picture of them in her mind. Her thoughts went out to them constantly, and with such an intensity, that she would enter into every detail of their daily life, their pain, their joys and anxieties. In a sense the physical separation was no hindrance to this kind of friendship. Even when she was overwhelmed by work, or was herself in terrible suffering, she would always manage to write to those whom she specially loved some of those long letters, from which I have quoted more than once.

She was very intimate with Miss Cécile Schlumberger, who belonged to a well-known Alsatian family, and who was obliged to spend ten years

of her life at Leysin. Both girls were there at the same time, but they never met. They were not in the same building. Mr. H. brought them into touch with each other later on. They began to correspond, and gradually they became more and more intimate. Miss Schlumberger was very different from her friend. She was highly educated, and had a veritable thirst for knowledge. In order to occupy her hours of leisure she used to read works of science and philosophy. Mr. Hoffet said about her: 'Her logical mind craved for a solution of the problems of life as well as of those of the speculative realm . . . she longed to see things clearly. . . . Naturally, with such a temperament, she passed through difficult seasons of inward rebellion. She had to wage a constant warfare between reason and faith, between thought and feeling. Above all, she was haunted by the problem of pain; she pondered over it long and earnestly, but without finding any real solution. . . . She felt its anguish in her own body; she saw its shadow all around her at Leysin, where it wore a distressing and apparently pitiless aspect. "Why, oh why," was her wistful question, "must we

suffer so much in this world ? ” And then there were those ten years of illness which sapped her life away, which were never explained, which shook her faith in God, and so sorely perplexed her logical mind, which panted after perfection ! Ten years of illness out of a life that closed at twenty-six ! Her beauty-loving eager spirit chafed under the physical limitations imposed by her illness, and the sum-total of all these hard and painful experiences (so sadly familiar to us at Leysin) formed a burden which her intense nature felt with twofold force, and her youthful spirit refused to accept.’<sup>1</sup>

Adèle Kamm exercised the best possible influence over her friend. She treated her in accordance with her own invariable principle, a principle which was almost always entirely successful : she set her to work, and thus diverted the melancholy current of her thoughts. Miss Cécile Schlumberger joined the Society of the ‘Coccinelles.’ She organised and directed the Leysin branch from the very beginning. And in this work her active and generous nature found ample

<sup>1</sup> In memory of Cécile Schlumberger, Mühlhausen, Dessaulles-Gluck.

scope for development. 'Do you not find,' she wrote to Adèle Kamm, 'that too much thinking may be a great snare in illness? I must confess, dear friend, that you have been a great help to me in this difficult struggle. Since I learnt to know you I have become more trustful and courageous. The work you have given me to do has done me good. In trying to help others we are helped ourselves . . . no victory is devoid of meaning . . . no loss is vain. . . . I spoke about you to my doctor the other day. He was looking at your photograph, and I said, "That is Adèle Kamm." And his answer was, "I thought it must be, from her radiant expression." . . . You do not know how many people you are helping. It does cheer me so when I look at you and realise that, in spite of everything, good is stronger than evil, and that its gentle rays penetrate the darkest corners of the world.'

Miss Schlumberger, on her side, by her strong personality and enlightened mind, had a distinctly good influence on Adèle Kamm. She gave her a broader conception and a wider outlook on life. She taught her to see the value of opinions with which she did not agree. To this chosen friend

Adèle Kamm used to write with entire freedom. In her letters to her she would often dwell on the danger of an Invalids' Union becoming 'goody-goody.' At other times, in order to encourage her beloved 'Lily,' she freely confessed that she too had to fight through difficult times.

'Just because I feel myself so imperfect,' she wrote to her on the 8th of July 1909, 'I believe in God with all my heart, for I need an all-powerful Being to forgive me. If I were without this comforting certainty I should never have a moment's peace! Then my weakness makes me so dependent on my friends, for I need some one to set me an example, and to encourage me on the uphill journey. And so, my dear, dear friend, the reason I love you so much is that I know that you feel the same as I do, and I can speak to you quite frankly, and ask you to help me. . . . If you were perfect (or thought you were!) I should be afraid to treat you thus, and your influence over me would be *nil*! But your high courage, and your pitiful compassion for all who suffer, makes you a real spiritual help to me. You can have no idea of what your letters and the books you have lent me have done for me. They have

surrounded me with an atmosphere of protection, in which my timidity has vanished and my nature has had freedom to develop along lines of usefulness.'

Miss Schlumberger made full use of her intellectual gifts in the work with which Adèle Kamm had entrusted her. She threw herself with enthusiasm into the activities of the Invalids' Union, paid visits, wrote letters, and spent herself freely for the members. 'I am so happy,' she told Mr. H. one day, 'now I see that my life can still be useful.' She began to enjoy life to the full, and at one time it almost seemed as though she were cured; but the disease was only in abeyance. Then came the last, long, painful illness, during which her courage never once faltered. All her doubts had melted away, and her Christian faith had become clear and strong. A few days before she died she said to Mr. H.: 'I have no more time or strength for intellectual argument. I have put my hand in His, and I am content!' She passed away at Leysin on the 7th of April 1910. Shortly before the end she dictated a few farewell words to her friend. Adèle wrote on the 8th of April: 'It almost

seemed as though my dear friend had sent me a message from the "other side" itself, a glorious farewell, and the assurance that her faith was entirely victorious. . . . I have suffered terribly during this last month of her distressing suffering, but I am calmer now. . . . I realise that I shall never see that much-loved handwriting again. But as I have never seen Lily in the flesh, our friendship was already eternal in its character, and she always seemed to me an ideal immaterial being, living in the very Presence of God, so her departure does not hinder our communion. I feel her nearness whether she is at Leysin or in heaven. I shall go on sharing my joys and sorrows with her in my mind, just as I used to do. . . .'

Later on, however, Adèle felt this loss very keenly. On the 10th of October she wrote thus to Mrs. H. R. (on whom she now lavished a great deal of that passionate affection which she used to give to Miss Cécile Schlumberger) : 'Dear Lily ! How we loved each other ! I do thank God for you, Hélène, for I really believe that the loss of Lily would otherwise have killed me. I love passionately . . . my affections are like yours,

part of my very being.' But she was not the kind of girl to brood over sorrow. She felt that a great work yet remained for her to do. She knew that her days were numbered, and that it could not be so very long before she would rejoin that friend, about whom she had spoken in terms which might be most truly applied to herself :

‘It is a beautiful and comforting thought that the value of life lies not in length of days, but in intensity and quality.’



## CHAPTER XIV

### THE PAVILION FOR OPEN-AIR TREATMENT

‘In pure universal charity, there is nothing fitful or intermittent. . . . Its springs are deep and constant, its rising is like that of a mighty river, its very overflow calm and steady, leaving life and fertility behind it.’

For an invalid who, according to medical opinion, had scarcely any right to be alive at all, Adèle Kamm did not exactly suffer from lack of occupation! But the visits she received from morning till night, the constant burden of correspondence, and the exacting labour of supervising the Society of the ‘Coccinelles,’ did not satisfy her active mind. She evolved a new scheme for helping invalids in poorer circumstances, and threw all her energies into this fresh form of service.

She had been brooding for some time over the difficulties of their lives. When she compared their lot with her own, she felt almost ashamed of herself. This mental attitude was habitual

to her, and is expressed over and over again in her letters :

‘I cannot help thinking,’ she wrote to Mrs. F. G., ‘of some poor sufferer living in a gloomy room in one of our large towns—a room with bare and dingy walls, into which no sunshine ever penetrates, and from which even the sky is shut out. In addition to physical suffering there may be anxiety about rent and food, and perhaps he may even have to go hungry if he cannot go on working. . . . Oh ! what a sad life it must be ! . . . And then sometimes when I am dwelling on these thoughts, I get a letter from a person like that, just radiant with faith in the midst of distress and misery . . . and it is a lesson to me. I wonder whether you will understand ? . . . I often feel ill at ease in my pretty pink room where I have everything I need, and a great deal more besides ; where I am always being cheered by the love of mother and sister, and by the visits of countless friends ! And I reason with myself like this : all these mercies seem so natural to me, that I am tempted to forget those who suffer just as much as I do, and have none of these things. I owe an enor-

mous debt of gratitude to God and to society. . . . How can I make any acknowledgment ? My heart always gives the same answer : Accept humbly every trial that God sends you, and lavish joy on others in return for your many mercies ! ’

Adèle rejoiced in the thought that she also had to suffer loss, and that this experience brought her into living touch with the ‘deposed, discrowned, and disinherited’ of the world.

‘You are like me,’ she wrote to the same friend ; ‘it is a real comfort to us to enter in some measure into the life of the “common” people, through the experience of deprivation. We can better understand their rebellious feelings, and our sympathy then is not merely a thing of words but of actual life, for even the very poorest can still enjoy the fresh air, and the pleasures of steady work. Anyhow, I am sure that most of them live better than I do ! I find that there is a peculiar joy in falling out of the ranks of the privileged folk ! And now I do not envy them any more. I really believe that there are many things that I could not appreciate now, since I have tasted the sweetness of inward joy and have lived a life of deprivation.’

Adèle Kamm was the kind of girl who could not help translating her sympathy into action. She set to work to think out the whole problem. 'Yes,' she pondered, 'a mountain sanatorium is all very well, but many people can only go there for a short time, and others cannot afford it at all. Some come back only half-cured. If they return to their poor, badly ventilated rooms, it may undo all the good they have gained from the mountain air. Would it not be splendid if they could have a sort of garden in a sheltered spot just outside the town, where they could live out of doors for several hours every day?' Adèle kept on turning over this idea in her mind, and then an opportunity occurred of propounding her scheme to one of the medical officers of the Anti-Tuberculosis Dispensary of Geneva, Dr. M. Much to her delight she found that this specialist had been thinking along the same lines for some time past. He had even prepared a tentative plan for an Open-air Treatment Pavilion. Funds, and above all a good initiative, were all that were lacking to set the enterprise in motion.

With her usual enthusiasm and decision Adèle went straight ahead with the work. At that

time she was still hesitating, from modesty, about publishing her little book, *Joyful in Tribulation*. But the thought that she could devote the profits to the 'Open-air Pavilion Scheme' decided her to do so, and she waited no longer. In a short time she was able (from her profits as author) to subscribe liberally to the fund. She directed the whole campaign from her bed with remarkable energy, perseverance, and womanly tact. She knew how to 'make things hum'! Doctors, clergymen, business-men, Members of Parliament, journalists . . . not one of them could refuse her any favour. They would do anything to please her. One influential business man, Mr. A. R., took the matter up with great keenness, and contributed largely to the success of the scheme by his daily visits of help and counsel.

Adèle insisted on managing everything herself, from the collecting of money (£480 was required) to all the details connected with plans, estimates, organisation, and furnishing. Nothing appeared trifling to her; she ordered comfortable reclining-chairs at the basket-work depot at Leysin (which had been started by Mr. H.), and had a specimen brought into her room for approval.

But people were critical in Geneva, and a certain amount of opposition had to be encountered. However, this is nearly always the case when a good work is first launched. Various objections were raised. Some people quibbled over minor points. 'Would it not be better to do this or that? . . . For instance, might not each patient be provided with a garden of his own where he could grow cabbages?' 'Gardening! . . . Planting vegetables!' wrote Adèle Kamm in great indignation. 'Have they no idea of what such illness means?' There was a prolonged controversy. Adèle threw herself into it with all the ardour of her intense nature. For her at that time the universe was centred in that little strip of land where already in imagination she could see the patients lying out in the sunshine, enjoying the fragrant beauty of the roses. For, with the thoughtfulness of a woman, she wanted them to be surrounded by roses.

At last every difficulty was overcome. The government provided a site near the hospital, on the Pré Jérôme, which had been presented to the municipality of Geneva in the fourteenth century by a wealthy philanthropist. The position

is good. It is easily accessible, and is sheltered from cold winds. Indeed, it is almost a shade too warm in the heat of summer. A very simple building was erected, consisting of a central pavilion with a kitchen and a room for the Sister in charge. On either side are two wings or covered balconies, each having room for nine chairs, one hall being reserved for men and the other for women. As the hospital lies behind them, the patients have a fine view on their left of richly wooded Champel and the distant outline of the Salève against the sky. The Pavilion was formally opened in June 1910. It was a very happy day for Adèle Kamm, though it seemed sad that she could not be motored over to the Pré Jérôme for the afternoon !

But she had the great satisfaction of seeing the work prosper just as she desired. It is under the control of the Anti-Tuberculosis Association (which had already opened a special dispensary in the city). The patients soon settled down in their new quarters. Indeed, the Pavilion has become a kind of club for invalids ! They like it so much that they have asked that it may also be kept open all through the winter. Their

request has been granted, and as the funds are in good condition it has been possible to provide not merely hot milk (as had been suggested at first), but a good midday dinner as well. The last report of the Association states that excellent results have already been obtained.<sup>1</sup> 'We sent nine men and five women to the Pavilion for Open-air Treatment,' writes Dr. Cramer of the Dispensary at Plainpalais. 'Thanks to the fresh air and sunshine which they have been able to enjoy, and to the good food which is given them, their general health is much better, and we also consider that the condition of their lungs has improved.' Dr. H. Mallet of the 'City of Geneva' Dispensary is not less eulogistic. He quotes authentic examples of remarkably successful cases.<sup>2</sup>

Adèle Kamm's idea is already being taken up

<sup>1</sup> Anti-Tuberculosis Dispensary of Geneva, Fifth Report, 1st January to the 31st December 1911.

<sup>2</sup> Case S. was at the Pavilion for 228 days (850 hours). During this time he gained 21 lbs. Case Sor. was at the Pavilion for 102 days (548 hours), from September 1910 to July 1911; during this period he gained 27 lbs. 8 ozs. A little girl R. attended for 186 days (1125 hours), and gained 13 lbs. 3 ozs. During 1911 the number of patients at the Pavilion may be classified as under:

22 men, 17 women, 1 boy, and 9 girls.



in other places ; many towns in Switzerland, as well as in other countries, have asked to see the plans for the Open-air Pavilion, that they may build similar institutions. Lady Aberdeen, Vice-reine of Ireland, had heard of the young invalid at Geneva, and of her work. She called on her at the 'Mairie des Eaux-Vives,' and was delighted with her charming ways and natural manner. On her return to Ireland she published a detailed account of her visit, full of the warmest sympathy for Adèle Kamm herself, for the Invalids' Union, and for the Open-air Pavilion scheme.<sup>1</sup> Just as she was taking leave she said to Adèle : 'Have you any message to send to the working people and invalids of Ireland ?' 'Oh, madame,' she answered, 'tell them how happy I am ! . . . tell them that there is no joy like that of working for others, and that I shall die rejoicing in the thought that, by the grace of God, the worst foe of mankind can be swept off the face of the earth if all men everywhere will work together for God and humanity.'

<sup>1</sup> Slainte, *The Journal of the Women's National Health Association of Ireland*, edited by the Countess of Aberdeen, September 1910, pp. 165 and following.

The Anti-Tuberculosis Campaign, to which Lady Aberdeen has devoted herself with so much energy, was always in Adèle's mind. Her desire to help in this movement was rendered all the more intense by the fact, as we shall see, that she did not believe that disease was in the direct line of the Divine Will. Having accepted her own affliction, she intended to do all that lay in her power to preserve others from infection. In planning for the Pavilion for Open-air Treatment she was thinking not only of the good that would accrue to the patients themselves, but also of the lessened danger for others. She was thinking of the children who play in the streets, and often romp round the public seats where poor consumptives may be resting, children who are just as healthy as she was herself when the terrible disease first attacked her.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE MESSAGE TO PRISONERS

‘Let your cry be for free souls, rather even than for free men.  
Moral liberty is the one vitally important liberty.’—**JOUBERT.**

FROM her bed, which was placed near the window, Adèle Kamm could no longer see what was going on in the street below, but she could still hear the roar of the traffic, and even this interested her deeply. The echo of the city’s noise and bustle kept her in touch with everyday life, with that life of strain and activity led by those who must work hard for their daily bread. But all she could now see was a broad expanse of sky, where, as evening faded into night, the stars, those shining companions of her sleepless hours, began to come out one by one. Far away on the horizon she could just distinguish the irregular outline of the Jura Mountains, ethereally blue and unsubstantial in the misty distance ; against this dreamlike background the massed roofs of the old

town, overshadowed by the towers of St. Peter, stood out in clear relief; and, still nearer, a silent, compelling presence, was the prison, a gloomy building whose sombre walls were pierced by long rows of narrow slits—the barred windows of the convicts' cells.

Blue sky and distant mountains, church and prison : to a thoughtful mind this view was most suggestive. From the purity of the sky she turned incessantly, drawn by an irresistible fascination, to contemplate the gloomy gaol. Every evening at the same hour the narrow windows were lit up from within, and just as regularly the lights disappeared at the hour of curfew. Adèle Kamm lay silently gazing at these rows of twinkling lights, but her thoughts were busy. And as she pondered she began to realise that each ray of light stood for a poor human life, banished from sight as unworthy, and burdened with the knowledge of its guilt. With her ever active sympathy she was constantly trying to penetrate in spirit into the life concealed behind those sombre walls. 'What are the prisoners doing now?' she would wonder. 'What are they thinking about? Their hearts are doubtless full of bitterness and rebellion.

And while I lie here in the peace of my pretty pink room, surrounded by so much loving care, they are sitting alone within the four bare walls of their cells.' As she never would allow her thoughts to degenerate into useless dreams, she used to cogitate every evening over some way of reaching these men. 'How can I help them?' she pondered; 'they are as closely confined as I am, and so very much more miserable! How can I send them some loving message, which might even open the way to a new life for some of them?'

In July 1910 she had an attack of double pleurisy, and her bed had to be moved away from the window. She could not see the lights of the prison from this new position, but she knew the 'lighting-up time,' and her thoughts were as busy as ever. Her breathing was difficult, and she had to remain in a sitting posture all night long, which made sleep an impossibility. To fill up these long sleepless watches she began writing to the prisoners, for their condition weighed on her mind more heavily than ever.

'Dear prisoners,' she wrote, 'we who are chronic invalids feel that a strong bond of sym-

pathy unites us to you who are prisoners. It is the fact of this secret bond which has made me long to tell you the thoughts which have been gathering in my mind during the long years that I have been shut up in my room.' Then she explained to the prison-inmates how she began to think about them when she saw their windows being lit up every night. 'At that hour of the evening,' she added, 'my thoughts used to fly over the intervening space and in through the little windows to the prisoners themselves, whom I pictured sitting in their cells at that moment, and my heart went out to you, for I am sure, that for you as for us, the hour when twilight fades into night is the most difficult of the whole day, awakening even sadder and more poignant memories than the dawn.'

'The hour when for each soul one hope there needs must be,  
The hour when gloomy night has spread its veil afar,  
When in its skies each sad heart loves to see  
The flashing of a star.'

'Then when the windows receded into the night, and the darkness seemed blacker than ever, and in the sky above the stars shone out with greater brilliance, while the curtain of sleep was

drawn gently for a space around those suffering lives . . . my thoughts went out in deep sympathy to all prisoners and captives and sleepless sufferers. . . .’

According to the principle by which she was invariably guided she tried to find out how prisoners, as well as invalids, could be freed from that depressing sense of uselessness and of exclusion from life. How could they in their imprisonment escape from spiritual bondage? By doing good. There alone is true liberty to be found, a freedom which no man can lose, for its source is in the depths of his inward life. ‘We may be free in heart, free in soul . . . yes, even we who are captives, if we can only realise that liberty is a spiritual thing, and independent of outward circumstances. . . . Liberty! What is it? Surely it is self-forgetfulness with this glorious end in view : to do good! . . . But how can we, invalids and prisoners, do any good in the world? Our lives are so much more restricted than those of others, it seems almost impossible that we can be of any use! But then how are we to discover this priceless treasure of moral freedom? This was the question I asked my-

self five years ago when I became an invalid, and when instead of being able to work, and help my family, I became entirely dependent on them for everything ; more dependent even than you, my friends, dependent on others for every trifling daily need ; if I want a book, or a handkerchief, or a pen, or something to eat, it is all the same, my helplessness is complete ; I depend entirely on those who wait on me. . . . Oh, what bitter tears I used to shed over this at night ! . . . Yet, for the past five years I have been quite happy, for at last I have become free. So I think we may speak openly to each other on the subject of that mysterious liberty which can exist in such seemingly adverse circumstances, and which contains the secret of real happiness, of that happiness which all men desire, and which they seek in so many different directions !

‘I have discovered this precious secret ; I found it out quite unexpectedly. Suffering opened my eyes to its beauty, that blessed suffering without which we could not help being selfish. Gradually it dawned on me that the people among whom I was living were all suffering in some way or other, and that every one of them needed love and sym-



pathy, inspiration and cheer ! . . . When I made this discovery I at once made another : that I must ask God Himself to fill me with love, and to give me strength to do good, to fulfil this ministry which seemed so strangely new to me ; for you know how very much easier it is to see other people's faults than one's own !

‘ But, after all, once we have grasped the idea nothing is simpler than to resolve that, in a very quiet way, we will try by personal example and by love to save some poor friend of ours who is drifting further and further away from good things. Perhaps he is sinking daily deeper into the misery of hate and bitterness of spirit, or into the drink habit, or into an attitude of settled and gloomy defiance ! Well, there is our opportunity ! We may try to help him to face life with fresh courage, to break the chains of vice ; or we may try to breathe into him, perhaps very slowly, a spirit of patience and of trust. . . . That in itself would be an advance which would bring you great joy. . . . Then you might go a step further, and in quiet, friendly conversation you might remind him that if he really and truly repents he will be free . . . free to begin an altogether

new life . . . a life of well-doing. . . . Well-doing ! . . . the very words breathe magical inspiration ; life becomes very beautiful when they are woven into its texture. We ought to do good without any thought of reward, simply for its own sake, for that is the only way to real joy and happiness. Perhaps your efforts to help your friend will be unsuccessful ; you may have to persevere for years before his heart will be touched. Never mind, go on just the same, no effort is ever wasted ; and who can estimate the spiritual value of a loving smile, or an affectionate gesture, given either to our companions, or to those who wait on us, and who are often very tired from their monotonous labour ! With such a purpose in life you are free indeed ! ’

But in true freedom there is one indispensable element, even for those who wear prison garb, and that is moral dignity and self-respect. These must at all costs be preserved, and when spiritual help is offered it must not be as from a superior height. With exquisite delicacy Adèle Kamm managed to avoid any appearance of pitying condescension in her letter to the prisoners. She came ‘ alongside ’ them in a very beautiful way ;

the help she proposed to render was of a mutual character.

‘ Yes, it was in the school of pain, deprivation, and loss that I was led to think of you, my dear comrades in suffering ; and this bond of sympathy urges me to ask you to remember those who are ill, to pray for those who are also prisoners, and who need your sympathy and affection. In the morning as you go to your work, please think sometimes of us who can do nothing with our hands, and yet who long to work ; and in the evening remember us once more, in our pain, for there is no good night’s rest in store for us. And if you are alone in your little room, think of us then, those of us who are never alone for a minute, who have to be watched and tended night and day, though sometimes we would love to have a little solitude ; and if you are able to go out of doors even for a few moments, think of us who can never stretch our cramped and weary limbs, and can never get a breath of fresh air.

‘ And on our side, as we look at the flowers and at all the comforts by which we are surrounded, at the affection of relatives and friends, we feel how privileged we are, and we wish we could

share these blessings with you ! So we must strengthen each other ; may we all be gallant soldiers fighting for the Right, remembering those words which have so often comforted me and many others too :

“ Where God has planted us, there must we learn to bloom.”

When the letter was written there arose the difficulty of getting it sent to its destination. This was not quite so easy as Adèle Kamm, in the simplicity of her heart, had imagined. She had to correspond with various officials. The Prison Board met her request very coldly, saying that they ‘ supposed that she alone considered herself fit to look after the prisoners’ moral welfare !’ Still, though the letter was marked ‘ unfavourable ’ it was sent in due form to the Home Office. ‘ My intimate message,’ wrote Adèle to a friend, ‘ where I poured out my heart in a most artless fashion, is being bandied about from one official to another in the Home Office.

‘ Ugh ! It gives me cold shivers all down my back to think of it !’

She had no hope that her request would be granted, and was deeply distressed in consequence.

When a long yellow official envelope arrived she would not open it at first. Greatly to her surprise, however, the answer was favourable, and a small number of copies of the 'Message to Prisoners' was printed and sent to the prison to be distributed in the cells.

Did these simple, touching words, the natural overflow of a loving, compassionate heart, ever reach some of these hardened lives? We cannot tell. We would like to think they did. At any rate Adèle Kamm herself was much comforted by this act of love and of faith in the power of goodness. She had just been passing through a particularly trying time. On the 25th of August she wrote thus to Mr. T. F.: 'I must tell you that though this year has brought me great joy, it has also been full of outward and inward trials. The lack of fresh air, the nervous strain caused by such close confinement, the effort to drive away boredom become more intensely difficult to bear as time goes on. Then, since May I have not known a day's relief from pain, to give me a chance of pulling myself together, and of gathering up fresh courage.

'Sometimes, I must confess, I have even given

way to tears, a thing I very rarely do ; but it has distressed me deeply to find that I am so dependent on my body. I have grown so terribly sensitive to noise, and things I used to bear quite cheerfully I find heavy and difficult. I have to struggle very hard to keep my head above water at all ! Oh, what weak creatures we are ! and how frail I am ! This summer's experience has at least taught me that. But, after all, I am not surprised that God has permitted it ; it is quite natural that He should test the faith of His children by laying upon them heavier trials as time goes on. And even if I have sometimes failed in temper (which I bitterly regret), there has been a deep undercurrent of joy all the time in the sense that my will is in complete harmony with the will of God, and this peace is so beautiful and rich that no trouble or pain can disturb its serenity.

‘How I did long for heaven in the days that followed my attack of pleurisy ! I had to force myself to wish to live, like a faithful soldier who will not desert his post. But there was one thing which helped me very much, and that was writing a letter to prisoners ; I did it during the nights

when I was so ill that I had to sit up in order to breathe. During that time of acute suffering my heart went out in deeper sympathy than ever towards those who suffer, or who are shut out from active life (although I know that prisoners deserve it); and it was such a joy to me to write this message, and to find out how much we had in common, for I believe that in all probability we deserve our confinement just as much as they do! In spite of all the spiritual vision which has been granted me, and all the love that has been lavished upon me, I have stumbled badly lately, and am very much ashamed of certain words and movements of impatience. So I am sure you will understand how much it helped me to write down just what I felt, quite simply, and without any effort after literary style, for I was too ill to think of such things. I found that the attempt brought me wonderfully near to Christ, for I drew all my inspiration from Him.

‘While I am on this subject I must tell you something that interests me tremendously. During these last few months I have been in constant communion with God, receiving from Him all the strength and wisdom I need for my

work . . . but I had insensibly drifted away from Christ. That did not, however, disturb me at all, for I remembered the words, "I and the Father are One." Then it seemed as though a veil were being drawn around my spirit, dimming the spiritual brightness in which I lived. I found that I had lost something of the sweetness of inward peace, something of the luminous radiance of vision which I used to possess, and I vaguely wondered why it was! But when I was writing the letter to the prisoners, which, as I told you, brought me into such close touch with Christ,<sup>1</sup> I was astonished to find that everything grew bright again. The mists were dispelled, and now I am once more on the mountain-top, daily rejoicing in the clear sunshine of His Love and Peace. So I have discovered that the blessings and influence which flow from God and from Christ are different in character, and that we need to pray to both sides of God, if I may put it so, if our spiritual hunger is to be satisfied. I

<sup>1</sup> In her little book Adèle Kamm had found it necessary to appeal to the influence of Jesus Christ. Among other things she said: 'You will tell him (your prodigal friend) that God loves His children, and that our Saviour came to seek those who are wandering, and who want to find the Way.'



am glad **to** have made this discovery for myself, for I like to found my faith on actual experience rather than on any kind of dogma.'

Adèle Kamm wrote another letter on the same subject to one of her most intimate friends, who was also a great sufferer, and, like Adèle, had gained her own experience. She responded in one of those rare letters, 'which transcend the usual order of things, and fill the heart with new hope and courage.'

'You do not know how much you have helped me,' wrote Adèle Kamm in reply, 'and, dearest, I knew very well that your spiritual life centred in God rather than in Christ before you told me so. It is this inward attitude of yours which makes me love you better than others, and I used to have the same feeling about Lily Schlumberger; whereas, in spite of everything, I do not feel the same sense of fellowship with those who see Christ *only*, and who so easily become narrow-minded. However, it is good for us to come into contact with them, for they supply what we lack. I have learnt much from them during the last few years, and I am trying to overcome my inward shrinking from their habits of expression. I am

deeply conscious of the fact that I should never have had the courage to write my little book, or to believe as firmly as I do, apart from their influence.

‘I wonder whether you understand what I mean? Perhaps I express myself too strongly, but I am sure that you speak just as hotly about some of Mrs. Prentiss’s books! I am so delighted to see that you feel exactly as I do on this subject. We understand each other absolutely, and so we are united in a holy fellowship. I think that one great advantage of the Union is that it teaches us to appreciate so many different minds, and to gain from each what we ourselves lack. I think that if we, on our side, need to make more of Christ, others may learn from us to see God more clearly, and so their faith will become more robust as they see more of God our Saviour, the Father of all mankind, not merely of a little band of believers.’

In this letter we catch the distinctive accent of Adèle Kamm’s Christian faith. She had not been brought up in the Revivalist school. Certainly she had a deep sense of sin, which led her to regard as serious the trifling faults of her child-

hood, or those outbursts of temper and nervous irritation from which all invalids suffer at times. But the thought of individual salvation did not interest her particularly. If she made much of the Cross, it was because, as we shall see, she sought in it the explanation of her own suffering. The joy and strength of her life lay in the fact that she was always in intimate communion with God.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE PRIVILEGE OF SUFFERING

‘Redemption is the raising up of man from the evil condition in which he feels sacrifice as pain, into a condition in which it is felt as joy, a condition of true and perfect life.’—  
J. HINTON.

‘I *have* had a happy life!’ said Adèle Kamm to me one day. The remark struck me almost dumb with astonishment. I could not help contrasting this gallant spirit with that of so many healthy people who are incessantly grumbling, though they appear to have everything that life can offer; and I must honestly confess, and that not without shame, that I thought upon my own moods of depression, and then gazed in mute wonder at this contented invalid who so thoroughly enjoyed life! ‘Such a happy life!’ I repeated to myself. ‘Does she really mean it, or is it merely bravado?’ But I saw that it was no brave pretence, for she said it so naturally and merrily; and her

dark eyes were dancing with an expression of gaiety almost like that of a happy child !

Adèle Kamm regarded her illness as a privilege.<sup>1</sup> She was never tired of emphasising this view in her writings and in her conversation, with an unmistakable accent of sincerity. She declared that the whole structure of her faith was based upon this conviction. 'Happiness is more precious,' she said,<sup>2</sup> 'when it has been mingled with anguish ; the profoundest peace comes after storm ; the light breaks out more radiantly from behind dark clouds. God gives special grace to those who pass through deep waters. . . . Do we not find that the darkest experiences of our lives force us, by their very poignancy, to throw ourselves upon the Everlasting Mercy ? . . . Trouble alone brings out the strength and quality of our faith, whereas happiness often has the opposite effect. Pain is the supreme touchstone ; we need renewing not merely on the surface of our lives, but in the depths of our being, and that is why suffering is inevitable. . . . Such pain becomes

<sup>1</sup> This thought of the privilege of suffering is found in St. Teresa's writings, *Œuvres Mystiques*, vol. iii., *The Way of Perfection*, pp. 201 and following.

<sup>2</sup> *Joyful in Tribulation*, pp. 22 and following.

a privilege when it leads us into the great fellowship of suffering ; indeed, the wider outlook which opens up before us transforms our sorrow into a sublime form of joy.'

From the very beginning of her illness she looked upon herself as one who was specially honoured. When she left Leysin she wrote thus to Mr. H. :

'It is so good to think that it is not we who choose our ministry, but that God leads us into it by a long chain of unforeseen events. I am so glad and thankful that God Himself sustains me in the restricted circumstances of my life, and I love to feel that He has chosen my place of communion with Him, and my sphere of service too, for otherwise I should be too weak to be of any use at all ! I must confess that even though I have been shown that God does use my life for Him under present conditions, I should want to run away and hide myself from everybody if ever I got back the use of my legs ! God knows my temperament, and that is why *He has given me a life of happiness, which I enjoy to the full, although I suffer at the same time, as I feel myself blessed in comparison with the thousands of*

*people who are not happy!*<sup>1</sup> Oh, it is good to be alive! even at Leysin and shut up in one room, when there is perfect harmony between one's work and one's conscience, between one's soul and God. This inward harmony is the secret of pure joy; but I find it so difficult to explain this to most of my visitors. I spent over an hour yesterday discussing the point with a lady who could not understand that I could be happier now that I am ill than I ever used to be when I was well.'

At every step of the way Adèle Kamm felt that an unseen Hand was leading her along the right path. Every attack of illness which increased her suffering only served to intensify her joy. The awful pain which tortured her body was turned into glorious blessing. She counted it a light thing compared with 'the many years of perfect happiness which she had spent in her pretty pink room!' When she thought of all those who suffer without these alleviations, of those 'unknown heroes labouring ceaselessly for the cause of God in the solitude of unhealthy regions, and surrounded by the hatred of suspicious

<sup>1</sup> The italics are the author's.

savages,'<sup>1</sup> she longed to deny herself some little pleasure, and it was a real comfort to her to suffer pain, because then she felt that 'the balance was even again.' But at the same time she enjoyed every moment of respite from pain. At one time the neck vertebrae were so badly diseased that they pierced the alimentary canal. To relieve her Dr. V. tried putting an ice-bag on the nape of her neck. She wrote on the 12th of July to her friend Mrs. R. : 'So I am resting on my little ice-pillow, and it is such a relief that I am sure you will be glad to hear about it too . . . the pain was simply terrible before. And then it is a comfort to mother and Dr. V. that the pain is at least bearable now that I have the ice. Oh, if you only knew how happy I am ! I feel a new and deeper sense of freedom and joy and gratitude ; above all I am so thankful for this illness which has taught me the secret of real deep happiness ! And I can say with conviction *that through this trial my life has been the happiest I know of, and I would not change it now for any other, so wonderfully have I been blessed.*'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Miss Schlumberger, 10th October 1909.

<sup>2</sup> The italics are the author's.



She wrote on the same topic to another correspondent : ' I have at last learnt to love my illness. . . . It does not seem an enemy any longer, but rather an inseparable companion, who teaches me many precious lessons by the way.' Surely no one ever carried the art of being an invalid to such perfection ! But then no one was ever more determined than she that illness should not make her life either useless or unhappy. Although she had learnt to love her affliction for the sake of all the good she gained from it, yet at the same time she fought against it with all her might, and would not allow it to subdue her spirit. Long ago she had determined its limits : ' You may destroy my body bit by bit,' she said, ' and, eventually, you may kill me, but in the meantime you shall not prevent me from *living* ! ' Life means work, and in action she renewed her strength. We have seen that she was constantly impressing this truth upon other invalids ; she did so because she had proved the value of this principle in her own life.

We who are strong and healthy can have no idea of what it costs those who are physically weak to put forth the will-power needed to keep them in

touch with ordinary life. It involves a conscious effort which must be renewed day by day. After the consultation at which the doctors decided that she must not be moved from her room under any circumstances, not even on to the balcony, she suffered much from the lack of that fresh air so necessary for her diseased lungs. It distressed her still more that she could no longer see the unknown passers-by in the street below, and she felt that the time had come for her to redouble her efforts to maintain her intellectual and spiritual vigour. On the 18th of February 1910 she wrote thus to Mrs. H. R. :

‘ I feel that there is real danger in living entirely in one room ; I mean the danger of becoming warped and narrow in outlook, and of losing our sense of proportion, which is sure to lead us into some error or another, and ultimately to an artificial view of life. For some years I did not feel this so much, because the memories of ordinary life were still sufficiently vivid to keep my outlook healthy and normal. But that is now no longer the case—those memories have become confused in my mind, and I only live on the recollections of my abnormal invalid life. I suppose I must

try to make up for this lack of experience by will-power, and I might even add by the use of common sense and intelligence. It is only by seeing all sorts of people, and hearing all kinds of opinions, that I can in any way keep in touch with ordinary life, and prevent my faculties from becoming either warped or stunted. That is why I try to take a keen interest in all sorts of things, even in balls, and sport, and fashions ! I am trying to fight against the weakness which might make me lazy ; and if I am stronger in the spring I mean to begin learning Esperanto. So you see that I am doing all I can not to rust out ! ’

In the sentences just quoted we see quite plainly that Adèle Kamm was endowed with plenty of good common sense. She was a *filie d’escient*, as Philip Monnier would have put it. She knew from experience that ‘invalids are often tempted for various reasons to lower their ideals : by the long years of seclusion, by all kinds of difficulties arising out of their helpless condition, or, on the other hand, by the unwise indulgence of those around them, but chiefly by that state of mental stagnation which leads them to be entirely

absorbed in their physical condition, and to forget that they too have a duty to fulfil in the world.' At all costs invalids must learn to maintain their sense of proportion, 'knowing that the body must be properly cared for, for it is not right to ignore it; and also realising that life has no meaning unless it is used in the service of others, and that the example of our invalid life ought to be the means of bringing numbers of sufferers who have lost the freshness of their early ideals to a saner view of life.'

Adèle Kamm never allowed illness to rob her of her youthful charm. She was the most attractive invalid I ever saw. I shall never forget my first visit to her. I was ushered into a room flooded with bright spring sunshine, where she lay in bed, for she had not been able to get up for a long time. Above her head a little canopy of some diaphanous material softened the effect of the light, and showed up her pale complexion. She was very prettily dressed. A pale pink shawl was thrown carelessly round her shoulders. She loved rose-colour, and liked to see her room gay with it. She once gave this delightful piece of advice to her comrades in suffering: 'Make your rooms

as attractive as possible, and turn out everything that even suggests illness.' She certainly carried it out herself; her brave spirit saw its necessity both for her own sake, and that of her family, as well as for the visitors to whom she was always ready to give a cordial welcome.

In my own case this pleasant reception put me at my ease at once, and I was much surprised to see nothing of a painful nature. And as she talked, sometimes with a childlike expression of happiness, and again, when the subject lay very close to her heart, with an almost feverish intensity, I was struck by her beautiful white hands, whose delicately graceful movements reminded me of the lovely saints in Memling's pictures.

Her room overflowed with happiness; we used to realise this fact when we had to take our leave, for we left it regretfully. The young sufferer was a radiant influence for good. No one could come into contact with her without being impressed by her joyful serenity. As one of her friends said to me: 'She always draws the best out of every one who comes into touch with her.' On the threshold of that charming room, always as gay with flowers as though its occupant were

on the eve of a festival, every visitor laid down the burden of sordid care or of ignoble feeling. She could only see the good in those who came to her. Believing implicitly in their goodness she made people long to be worthy of her opinion. From all quarters a constant tide of sympathy flowed into her quiet chamber. No one could help loving her ; she was so appealing in her purity and innocence. Such a beautiful expression of simple goodness shone in those steadfast eyes, which had never beheld the world's sore evil. Unsullied as a vestal virgin she had been set apart by pain, far from all that was low, degrading, or mean. She was shut out also from the dusty tumult of life's battle, and through this separation she had indeed won the highest victory : she had transformed her suffering into a glorious privilege.

## CHAPTER XVII

### DARK HOURS

'We cannot kindle when we will  
The fire which in the heart resides ;  
The spirit bloweth and is still,  
In mystery our soul abides.  
But tasks in hours of insight will'd  
Can be through hours of gloom fulfill'd.'

M. ARNOLD.

IN the spiritual realm there is no such thing as absolute and conclusive victory. We must not imagine that Adèle Kamm spent her latter years in undisturbed tranquillity and peace. Like an Alpine climber, who before he can reach the topmost peak must make his toilsome way along the edge of a precipice, she had to strain every nerve in order to keep her footing. It is not surprising to learn that she had to fight many a hard and lonely conflict, and though she nearly always managed to meet her visitors with a smile, yet when night came, and she was alone, the almost intolerable suffering would sometimes

wring from her bitter tears. Either from stoicism or pride she would hide this feeling from those whom she did not know well; and she never spoke of it to those who depended on her brave example for inspiration. But if she knew that any of her correspondents were ready to faint under a heavy and well-nigh unbearable burden of suffering, she would then unveil her own pain and her own weakness, as though she would say, 'Do you suppose that life is a bed of roses to me?' She would never allow her triumphant faith to be a source of discouragement to weaker souls.

She did not attempt, however, to conceal her feelings from the little circle of intimate friends to whom she was bound by every tie of fellowship in thought and feeling and in the experience of suffering. On the 9th of November 1909 she wrote thus to Miss Schlumberger :

' . . . O Lily, you do not know how your sweet words have helped me ! Then the "Coccinelles" help me too ; and the intense love that I feel for my own dear ones, for my friends, and for all the poor hungry souls who crave for affection, all this makes me struggle



with all my might to live a little longer if possible. But I am sorry to say that only yesterday selfishness, ugly, horrid selfishness, got the upper hand, and I was very unhappy in consequence. I had had three consecutive attacks, and such bad ones that it was impossible either to sleep or eat, and I felt so utterly spent and weary that yesterday afternoon, about four o'clock, I did something I have scarcely ever done before—I asked them to turn on my little electric lamp, and to leave me alone, alone with my pain and with God.

‘Shortly afterwards the doctor came, and he was terribly distressed to see me in such suffering. I would like to have sent him away too ; and perhaps it would have been the best thing to do. He was so concerned and grieved that he could not relieve the pain, and so after he had chatted for a while about his little girls, and had promised that they should come and see me soon, he sat by me for some time in silence. At last he got up, took my hand, and just said, “My poor child !” Then, unable to control myself any longer, I burst out : “O doctor ! how long can I go on living in this pain ? I cannot bear any more !” “I don’t know,” he answered, and went away.

Oh ! how his sympathy did comfort me, but I felt so vexed with myself, for I had distressed him, my good, kind friend, and I was also grieved that he should carry away such a poor impression of my faith and joy in suffering; though, after all, I was not feeling rebellious, but only longing to go home.'

Adèle soon noticed how much it tried her mother and sister to see her in this state of depression and weariness and pain.

'At last, when they had all gone to bed,' she added, 'I was very miserable, for by my selfishness I had succeeded in making every one around me unhappy, and myself into the bargain. I reminded myself of all the confusion that my death would cause, and what I still could do to make my dear ones happy; and then I began to pray very earnestly for strength to go on fighting, and to conquer my selfishness, so that I might again be able to give out joy, instead of making every one around me miserable. My prayer was answered, and towards morning I was able to sleep, and to-day I seem to have taken a turn for the better. I feel much braver, and have even been able to take some food.'

‘This evening I feel quite set up by the brief respite, and I am taking advantage of it to have a chat with you, darling, for I cannot tell whether the lull will be long or short. If you only knew, Lily, how strange it seems to me to have to struggle to live, when all the time I feel an irresistible longing to be with Jesus Christ. From month to month He becomes more wonderfully attractive to me, His Light seems more radiant, His words more living and deeper in meaning, and I feel so trustful, so happy, so joyful, that it is with real difficulty that I make myself stay here when I want to fly away, to throw off the burden of this suffering body, and to penetrate into that mysterious Beyond, to enter fully into the wonder of that intense Divine Love! Still, I am a very ordinary little mortal, and it has been my habit ever since I was a child to put duty before inclination, and this view of things helps me more than I can say at this critical moment. Duty first! Those are my orders! and I must stick to my post and not neglect anything for that; I believe that I can live for a good while longer if only I am brave, but I do need a stimulus, and the “Coccinelles” supply just the kind I want.’

Adèle Kamm lived in constant communion with God, but like all the mystics—for she was a mystic, though she did not realise it herself—she had her moments of weakness and even of rebellion. She used to distinguish three distinct phases in her spiritual state: the anguish of rebellion, the intermediate state of passive submission, free from all bitterness, and then ‘the blessed experience of willing and joyful surrender which floods the soul with such pure and beautiful spiritual joys that trial, in these circumstances, becomes a source of profound blessing and happiness.’ On the 23rd of February 1910, in a message to the ‘Coccinelles,’ she confessed that she had had ‘a terrible fall, and a most unexpected one,’ from entire tranquillity to rebellion, without stopping at the intermediate phase of passive submission. However, even in that which she calls rebellion, her love to her neighbour is still the prevailing sentiment:

‘ . . . Conflicts and tears have again been my portion,’ she wrote, ‘and I have realised afresh what it is to be among the number of those who faint under their burden of suffering, and, can you believe it, in spite of my distress, *I felt a deep*

*inward satisfaction in sharing the experience of the saddest portion of humanity*<sup>1</sup> . . . I rose again soon to the higher level of resignation, where I did not feel so unhappy. But it is a curious thing, and one I was very glad to prove for myself, that during those two weeks of passive submission I received no message from above for others, and I was unable to give out anything at all. The saddest and most touching letters did not move me in the least, and I did not try to answer them, as I had nothing to give in the way of spiritual help. I felt as though I *could* not give up my own way, and joyfully accept the prospect of spending another summer in my room and in bed. No, I could not, and then I sounded the depths of my spiritual weakness. Happily for us Christianity is a positive thing. As M. Monod remarks in that book of his which I like so much, *Silence and Prayer*, a Christian must not say, "If only I might be helped from on high," but, "I know that my help comes from Above!" So I repeated that sentence in all humility of soul, and it certainly gave me fresh patience and trust. At length, on Saturday last, without any special preparation in the way of

<sup>1</sup> The italics are the author's.

prayer or meditation, I felt a sudden inrush of joy, that joy which I had so completely lost. Without any kind of struggle, and, in consequence, without victory, I was back in my habitual sphere, saying with joy: "Yes, Lord, my life belongs to Thee; use it just in the very best way for my own good, for that of others, and for Thy Glory!" Since then I have again been the happiest creature alive. I threw myself into work with fresh joy. . . . This experience has been a salutary lesson to me, and has taught me to sympathise more fully with those who struggle, and with those who are ready to faint and fail, and for whom one needs to have words of cheer which have been learnt in recent trouble and not merely in years gone by.'

The thought of all the sufferers, and others who depended on her, was a great stimulus to Adèle Kamm. 'In healing the wounds of others we are ourselves healed, comfort comes to us as we try to bring comfort to others. . . . Invalids have a much greater influence than people who are well. They have many more ways of helping others; I am sure it is so from my own sweet and happy experience.'

She was so deeply attached to her ministry of sympathy, that when she reflected on her approaching death she could only grieve that the 'pink room' would no longer be open for those who came there to seek peace and refreshment. When her suffering increased, and she felt herself on the verge of giving up the struggle, she would think of those who looked to her for inspiration, just as when in battle a leader knows that the least wavering on his part will cause a panic among his followers his courage rises to the demands made upon it. But this was a very heavy responsibility for a young invalid girl! Her beloved 'Coccinelles' were not the only people whom she inspired with courage by her letters and messages. More and more her room became, as Huysmans described that of St. Lydwina, a 'Hospital for Souls.' And her example exerted even greater influence than her words.

'Invalids have a great influence over healthy people,' she wrote on the 5th of July 1909 to Mrs. H. R.; 'the latter sympathise with them, and eagerly watch to see what faith can do in trial. If faith is triumphant then no sermon, no address, will come anywhere near it for convincing power

and value. In these days of scepticism we need living witnesses to the power of Christ, and this particular kind of witness impresses every one. For some months past I have felt a greater responsibility than ever about the power of faith in suffering. I pray very often that God will uphold me and direct all my words, for scores of visitors are watching me, ready to falter if I seem to weaken, or to believe with all their heart if I am full of peace and of confidence in God's love. I am not referring just now to my correspondence, which is a work in itself, but to the people who come to see me in my pretty room with the one desire of gaining spiritual help.

‘And you, dear friend, who know my nature to be so simple, so faulty, so uncertain of itself, and, I might say, almost worldly, you can understand that I feel quite overwhelmed sometimes, and long to be once more the unknown girl of former days. But that does not seem to be the will of God. Every life has an influence for good or evil. I have gone through a great deal of painful inward experience ever since I was quite little. I am sure that God has ordered my life for a very definite purpose, as my present con-



dition shows; and He has done it with such tenderness and exquisite gentleness, bringing each trial gradually to me, that now I lie here in my helplessness a willing instrument in the hands of God. I take up the task He sets me, even though I would have preferred to remain unnoticed. I will be brave, and shoulder even that responsibility which seems almost too much for my spiritual and physical powers. And since it is my life-work to witness to the power of faith in suffering, I accept it very gratefully, and I thank God for it every day, asking Him to sustain me in this most beautiful path of service—that of glorifying Him by suffering, and so, by this means, of leading many souls to trust Him too.’

Putting her own troubles aside Adèle was sometimes called upon to listen to the complaints of perfectly healthy people, and even to practise the difficult art of mind-healing. ‘A lady came the other day,’ she wrote to a friend, ‘to ask me point-blank to comfort her soul!’ And the poor girl, strong in faith as she was, was quite worn out by the Jeremiad to which she had to listen. On the 15th of November 1909 she wrote to Miss Schlumberger: ‘Sometimes I faint under the

burden of all these varied confidences, which are sometimes so intimate that I am astonished by them. And why, why is all this confidence poured into my ear alone ? I know perfectly well that it is not because I have anything striking to say, but simply because my heart is overflowing with compassion for all who suffer ; and therefore I do not hesitate to break through my natural reserve to speak of my sufferings and of my deepest feelings, in the hope of soothing some of these poor souls by letting them know that they are loved. Yes, love—everything lies in that word.’

‘ Yes, love—everything lies in that word.’ Adèle Kamm possessed the gift of love to such a degree that it almost amounted to genius. This is the impression we get from reading her letters. We must not expect to find, as she herself said, charm of style or originality of thought,—the tone is rather that of the most artless sincerity. I have tried to let her own voice be heard, just as she used to speak, for this little book has not been written for those cultured people who value nothing but literary elegance, but for ‘ weary and heavy-laden souls,’ who are in search of spiritual comfort and refreshment. Adèle Kamm was

guided by one thought and one only, and it determined the character of all her correspondence : to radiate a holy influence, to find words of comfort for the sick, to encourage those who were bravely fighting the battle of life, to raise up the faint-hearted by lavishing on them that wise and tender affection which seeks the highest good of those on whom it is bestowed. She was infinitely tender to those who gave her their confidence. She surrounded them with the most loving thoughtfulness. She knew exactly what each one needed. Even when she spoke of herself she was always thinking of others. Her whole life was a sermon. She was never tired of saying, 'The peace which I, weak and unworthy as I am, have won, may be your experience too.' She longed that the example of her own life should be one of those 'living witnesses' which she (most rightly) considered so necessary in the life of these days. We ought to receive this witness with care and reverence, for it is of more value in our eyes than all the creeds and texts in the world ; we must bow before the supernatural power which can so transfigure a young life.

It seems scarcely credible, especially if we know anything of the miseries of insomnia, and yet it is true that Adèle Kamm's happiest time was at night when she could not sleep for pain. Even when she felt most ill she never wanted any one to sit up with her. She loved to be quite alone in her room, where silence reigned at last after all the noise and bustle of the day. Sometimes, far on in the night, she would light her electric lamp, and write to her friends; at other times she would lie in the darkness watching a solitary star shining in at her window, seeing its brilliance fade away until it vanished in the greyness of the dawn. That was the hallowed moment when she could pray best. In July 1910, when it seemed probable that death was not far off, she wrote to Mrs. H. R.: 'My left lung is now quite useless, and the right is so badly affected that I suffer much distress from difficulty of breathing, especially at intervals, when my heart goes wrong as well. These are my worst times, and I find it hard to be patient then. At night I get on much better spiritually, because I have such a delightful sense of being upheld . . . and I long to go joyfully home to God, without having

to witness the distress of those I love so dearly. I enjoy being alone, even when I feel very ill, because I am not in the least afraid ; but if any one sits up with me my peace is disturbed. I suppose because I am depending on other people instead of on God and on myself.' Her prayer was no formal utterance. In the stillness of the night a heavenly peace enfolded her. In the hush of the Divine Presence her suffering was soothed like that of a sick child in its mother's arms. She gave herself into God's care with loving trust.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE CROSS

‘It is not enough that Christ died once ; He must be dying always.’

‘ . . . Knowest thou,’ said Christ, ‘ what it is that I have done unto thee ? I have given thee the Stigmata, that are the signs of My Passion, to the end that thou mayest be My standard-bearer.’—(From *The Little Flowers of St. Francis of Assisi*.)

THE secret of Adèle Kamm’s abiding and triumphant joy lay in the fact that it was constantly renewed in the hidden depths of the unfailing fountains of pain. In the crucible of Christian faith her sorrow was turned into a wonderful joy. Her faith was of an essentially living and individual type. ‘In my opinion,’ said Miss S. G. in a letter to me, ‘that peculiarly vital and radiant element in her piety was the result of an entirely spontaneous religious development, free from all extravagance or undue pressure from outside influences ; her spiritual growth was natural and unforced ; she was allowed to develop along her own lines, without being either checked



Life and Death Are to Me the Same Joy





or hastened by the zeal of well-meaning relatives, or by the care of a spiritual director. The atmosphere of truth pervaded it from the very beginning; there was an entire absence of all scrupulous rigidity, or of artificial and imaginary experience, and her whole inward life was guided by the Inner Light, loyally followed by an upright and noble soul, whose nature had been deepened and purified by suffering.'

She is quite right. Adèle Kamm owed very little to human teaching. She grew up in her own way, educated in the severe but wholesome school of suffering. We must therefore attach but secondary importance to the influences which did affect her. She was susceptible only to those which were of assistance to her in the path which she knew she was meant to follow. And if we may mention any one book which, read at the right moment, brought heavenly light to her soul, we do so knowing that it had this effect on her simply because she found in it the reflection of her own personality; and because it gave her intense joy to find her own thoughts set forth with absolute clearness, thoughts which up till that moment had been confused, vague, and semi-

articulate. Such was her experience on reading the book entitled *Studies on the Value of Suffering*, by Mr. Ernest Rostan,<sup>1</sup> which had been lent her in August 1909 by Mr. M.

‘You cannot imagine,’ she wrote to Mr. M., ‘my feelings of profound surprise and satisfaction when, on opening the unknown book which you had so kindly lent me, I discovered that I was reading an exact interpretation of all my thoughts, whether clearly defined or only half-conscious (even to myself), and indeed the expression of my deepest feelings; and all without the slightest discord, without a jarring word or phrase which could in any way spoil the impression left on me by this splendid book, *Studies on the Value of Suffering*.

‘It is not the kind of book to read through quickly, and yet in five hours I had completely mastered every part of the argument, and even Rostan’s modes of expression as well, which shows you that my own point of view exactly coincides with that of Rostan; and that this book simply sums up, in a very beautiful and perfect manner,

<sup>1</sup> A new edition of this book has just been published by George Bridel, Lausanne.

the gist of my thoughts, whether consciously defined or not, for a long time past.

‘Just at first the introduction to the book made me feel a little apprehensive, for Mr. Philip Bridel seemed rather uneasy because certain chapters, such as “Expiation through Suffering,” had been included in the volume. But the beauty, the sublime spirituality of that chapter gave me the deepest joy. Bridel cannot understand it as Rostan and I can, because, as he himself says, he has not passed through the fiery trial of long physical suffering. He has not known those sleepless nights when our thoughts try to penetrate insoluble mysteries . . . and when, if faith does not come to our aid, we may so easily lapse into sheer unbelief. No, for those who have not suffered much the chapter on “Expiation through Suffering”<sup>1</sup> may well seem very mysterious and almost unreal. That is why, until now, I have always taken care to hide the secret of my joy in suffering in the deepest recesses of my soul. Faith and the love of God in Christ can give the only consolation to those in affliction, but I believe

<sup>1</sup> There is no chapter bearing this title in Mr. Rostan’s book, but there are two chapters entitled respectively: ‘The Necessity for Expiation,’ and ‘The Mystery of Expiation.’

the source of abiding joy in constant suffering lies in a somewhat vague, confused, but real sense of vicarious sacrifice. Even when this feeling becomes more definite, we cannot go to our neighbour and say, "I am in a state of heavenly bliss unknown to the majority of men and women, because I know that I am suffering a direct chastisement inflicted by God, not only for my own sins but also for the sins of the whole world, for that burden of guilt which would overwhelm us altogether were it not for the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and that of the members of His Church." This holy joy would be misunderstood, criticism would soon extinguish the sacred flame which burns in the depths of the soul, and I have never mentioned the subject to any one ; indeed, I even suppressed the lines that I had written about it, in the MS. of my little book, under the heading of "Joy."

The reason why Adèle Kamm could enter into such full sympathy with Mr. Rostan was that he too was a comrade in suffering. He had trodden the same path and had reached the same goal. Mr. Philip Bridel tells us in his preface that these beautiful and touching *Studies on the*

*Value of Suffering* first came into being as a series of simple Sunday meditations addressed by Mr. Rostan to his fellow-sufferers at Leysin in 1899. This book, the fruit of mature thought and experience, cannot be summed up in a few sentences. Mr. Rostan bases his whole argument upon the words of St. Paul :<sup>1</sup> 'I . . . fill up on my part that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the Church,' the word 'Church' being taken in its broadest sense, and covering the whole of regenerate humanity. Mr. Rostan's view is that when a Christian accepts undeserved suffering he shares in the sufferings of His Master.<sup>2</sup> His pain becomes a kind of crucifixion through which he also, in his imperfect way, may atone for sins which are not his own.

'But,' some one will say, 'is not this a very dangerous doctrine ? does it not lead to spiritual pride ? is it not sacrilegious to put oneself in the place of the Son of God ?' And Mr. Rostan foresaw this objection. 'Our expiatory sufferings,' he says,<sup>3</sup> 'do not, of themselves, achieve the

<sup>1</sup> Col. i. 24.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 173 and following.

<sup>3</sup> See pp. 177 and following.

salvation of any one, but they have a moral value flowing from the redemptive power of Christ, and which acts in the same manner. . . . We do not take the place of Jesus Christ, we manifest Him. . . . We do not add to the power of His redemption, but we release it for the good of others.' Any one can see in what way Mr. Rostan's doctrine differs from the Roman Catholic teaching concerning transference of merit. However, it is not our business to enter into details about this view of Mr. Rostan's, much less to discuss it fully. All we wish to do is to make clear the part it played in Adèle Kamm's experience. We may call it the glowing centre of all her religious thinking, the oft-renewed source of her strength and joy. It is evident that the perusal of *Studies on the Value of Suffering* acted as a great help and stimulus to her.

'I know you will be glad to hear that I am having a good week,' she wrote to Mrs. F. G. on the 20th of August. 'I am sure you would like to see me now; my face has filled out; I look more like myself again. Several good nights have given my eyes a brighter expression, and I feel that it is good to be alive! I am so thankful for this

time of respite, which I am enjoying with all my heart, for I know that I do not deserve it in the least. I regard suffering as an integral part of life, owing to the fact of sin, not of our individual sins in particular, but the great mass of human guilt, which would overwhelm us utterly were it not for the great love of God and the sacrifice of Christ. I feel that it is already such a glorious thing to know that we can be forgiven, and that we may one day enter into the bliss of heaven, that every happy experience in this present life seems almost too good to be true, and fills me with overflowing gratitude.

‘For a long time now I have cherished, deep down in my heart, a certain conviction, which, though at first somewhat vague and elusive, has become clearer during the last two years, and is really the source of all the joy which I experience in my affliction. I believe that suffering, accepted with submission, may be a means of great blessing to us; but I also believe that we may go a step further, and that by the voluntary acceptance of our cross in the Spirit of Christ (that is, in union with the Will of God) we may help, in some measure, to bring about the final victory of good

over evil. This ultimate triumph of Goodness, foretold in the New Testament, and confirmed by all the highest aspirations of our spiritual nature, is an aim so beautiful and sublime that the thought that we may hasten the final destruction of sin by the glad and willing uniting of our sufferings with those of the Master is an incredibly powerful motive and inspiration, as I am finding out, to my great joy, every day I live.'

Adèle Kamm looked upon the whole of mankind as one family whose members were indissolubly united to each other, forming one body. But it seemed to her that, owing to the fact of sin, humanity had missed the way, and lost itself in a maze of bewildered confusion. This accounted for the 'problem' of suffering. For, since we have 'wandered' away, why should suffering, even of an intensely painful nature, cause us any surprise? Surely it would have been unnatural had it been otherwise.

'And we also suffer with, and on behalf of, each other,' she adds; 'that is to say we make atonement for each other. All of us suffer in some way, but some have to bear a double portion,



for the sake of those who suffer less—the innocent child for the criminal, the elect for the depraved. . . . We continue the work of Christ in miniature : He, the Holy and Just One, consented to suffer and become the Son of Man, in order that He might be one with us, and make atonement for His brethren and save them . . . and should not we human beings, who are bound to each other by the ties of common brotherhood, be glad and willing to give ourselves to suffer for each other ? When sin has been conquered, and good has triumphed, when we have gained the final victory through Christ, and when He comes in great glory, then, oh, then . . . what joy it will be for those who for this glorious end have suffered willingly, and united their efforts to those of Christ ! There, my dear friend, you have the secret of the faith which strengthens me to go forward with courage, and which makes my present life of suffering far happier than the former one. I am so grateful that I am allowed to suffer in a noble cause, and I rejoice to know that, in a quiet way, my life is being used for the good of the race.’

It was such a comfort to her to have reached

absolute clearness of thought on this point, and, consequently, to dare to express it freely, that she at once began to share this joy with all her correspondents. 'We may do on a small scale what Christ has done on a sublime one,' she wrote on the 28th of August to Mr. H., 'and so we enter into fellowship with Him. Only, we must not forget that Christ *chose* this life of suffering, and we do not choose it, we submit to it, for we are sinful: *our sole act of moral value is to suffer willingly instead of merely passively submitting*, and in this surrender of the will we may, as I believe from the bottom of my heart, hasten the victory of good in that awful struggle between the powers of good and evil.' It is precisely this willing surrender which, far surpassing the state of neutral and gloomy resignation, turns pain into joy and makes sickness a privilege—a privilege and a glorious honour, since it allows the sufferer to share in the sufferings of Jesus Christ and in His redemptive work. In this manner Adèle Kamm has been able to explain to us the secret of that joy which appeared to us little short of miraculous.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE RELATION OF THE DIVINE WILL TO SUFFERING

‘ . . . It is no argument against the love of God that the world is a world of pain, provided, as we know to be the case, that God Himself has elected to suffer more than the greatest sufferer, and that there is a worthy end to it all. . . .’

BISHOP BRENT.

SUFFERING, however, is not confined to the realm of human existence. The whole universe is under her inexorable sway. A modern French writer <sup>1</sup> has thrown out the suggestion that, if we could penetrate the mystery of the stars, we should find, even in these, the same process going on, we should have to contemplate the same awful spectacle of ‘ Nature, red in tooth and claw,’ carrying out her pitiless design. And, indeed, if those countless worlds of whose existence we are aware, but which lie far beyond our ken—if they also throb with

<sup>1</sup> *Anatole France*, through one of his characters, M. Bergeret.

life, then we may be sure that death will be there too ; for death is the shadow cast by life, assuming the proportions of a giant spectre, hounding on her prey to a certain doom.

Taking up the thought of Pascal that our human existence is poised midway between ' two spheres of infinity,' we see that this whole realm is under her control. Examine a drop of water under a microscope, and you will observe the same phenomenon. Look at the very ground upon which you tread, and you will there see the same law at work. Every tuft of grass is a battlefield in miniature, and the scene of many a ruthless massacre. We destroy life by the mere fact of our existence. We often kill living creatures quite thoughtlessly, apart from any personal considerations of comfort or utility. What purpose can be served by the suffering of yonder insect, crushed by a careless heel ? The sight of the dumb agony of a few shell-fish, left stranded on the shore by the receding tide, and slowly scorching to death in the sunshine, made such a profound impression upon a sensitive, thoughtful woman, Mme. Théodore Flournoy, that she began to doubt the all-pervading goodness of

that Providence of whom Racine speaks in the following terms :

‘By God’s provision new-born birds are fed,  
And o’er all nature is His kindness spread.’

‘Why is it?’ she mused, ‘that this Beneficent Power which broods over Nature is everywhere found lacking? Why does He permit so much cruelty, so many horrors, so much useless suffering?’

At a later period in her life Mme. Flournoy had to pass through terrible personal sorrows. Her much-loved brother, Dr. Henry Burnier, a useful and able man, who was working at Leysin with great devotion, was one day shot by an unhappy lunatic. The question then arose in her mind, ‘Ought I to see the hand of God in this event?’ She felt that she could not do so; and, being a poet, she poured out the perplexity of her soul in the following burning stanzas : <sup>1</sup>

‘Insensate, hateful Death, why wilt thou take  
Thy cruel pleasure only in our pains?  
Of thy dread might are these the gains,  
These broken flowers, these tears from hearts that break?’

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<sup>1</sup> *Recollections of Marie Flournoy-Burnier, 1856-1909* (for private circulation), p. 50.

Eternal Father, God whose tender care  
 And all unresting mercy overflows  
 Our blackest, vilest sins, are these our woes  
 Thy doing then? *Thy* will—this dread despair?

O Holy God! upon the Cross Thy Son  
 Died as the guilty die. Was *that* from Thee?  
 Was *that* the only price to set us free?  
 Were we not sad enough, till *that* was done?

O God of Life and Grace, exalted high,  
 If I blaspheme Thy name wilt Thou forgive?  
 But if as Thy dear child I still would live,  
 In evil hands must I Thy Hand descry?

When in the shadow plots the murderous heart,  
 Is Thy pure will at work within his hate?  
 When battle-fields are swept and desolate  
 And ships return no more, hast Thou a part?

“Thou shalt not curse thy brother” Thou hast taught,  
 And wilt *Thou* curse Thy child? May God forbid.  
 ’Tis Thou in hearts the life and light hast hid . . .  
 No God of shadows, Thou, nor Lord of naught.’

Other cruel bereavements fell to Mme. Flournoy’s lot. She longed with growing intensity for a satisfying conception of God, which would free Him from the responsibility for the incomprehensible suffering which threatened to overwhelm her on every side.

‘That period of her life was a time of unspeak-

able anguish, for the loss of her faith added poignancy to the bitterness of her grief,' says Mr. Théodore Flournoy in the preface to the *Recollections*.<sup>1</sup> 'She feared that hope was gone for ever, but a sincere religious faith can arise even out of the dead ashes of such a devastating fire, rendered stronger and purer by having passed through the crucible of sorrow. After fifteen months of terrible mental and spiritual distress, peace came at last. Marie regained balance and calmness of mind when she perceived that in the Christianity of the Gospels there is nothing to lead us to attribute suffering to the Will of God, since Jesus Christ Himself, differing widely in this respect from so many Christian people, and even from many clergymen of our day, never ascribed to our Heavenly Father the miseries that He met and relieved, but He attributed them to the Evil One alone.

'She stated her new position in the phrase: "God is absent from the world." Of course this expression must not be taken too literally, nor its meaning pressed too closely. She only meant it to shadow forth her deep conviction that God

<sup>1</sup> Page 7.

is not vitally connected with the bodily and mental ills from which we suffer.'

Thus Marie Flournoy found herself on the horns of that formidable dilemma which has tortured so many devout souls: Touched by the insistent cry of a suffering world, how can any thoughtful person maintain that the Creator is both All-powerful and All-loving? If He is Love, how can He endure the sight of so much terrible and often useless suffering, and that not only of mankind, but of all living creatures? If He is All-Powerful, why does He allow it? In common with many present day Protestant thinkers, such as William James, Wilfred Monod, Charles Wagner, and Stephen Secrétan, she tried to solve the problem by giving up the conception of God's Omnipotence in order to be able to keep her belief in His Love. And along these lines she regained her faith.<sup>1</sup> It was exactly the opposite conclusion from that to which Adèle Kamm had been led. We have no right however to infer from this fact that one of the two was necessarily

<sup>1</sup> See the detailed description of this experience in 'Notes on Religious Psychology,' by Mr. Théodore Flournoy (*Archives de Psychologie*, vol. ii. p. 327. October 1903).



in the wrong, as our reason, objecting to all logical contradictions, would lead us to suppose.

Never more plainly than in this insoluble problem do we see that our views are but the imperfect reflection of our own personality upon an evershifting screen. Whether for good or for evil, our ideas are moulded into logical form by the pressure of some powerful feeling. Intellectual pride dims the vision of truth ; reason considers herself the supreme guide, when in reality she is obeying the will of another. She is like an unscrupulous lawyer who has undertaken to defend a cause with plausible arguments, but whose speech, however clever it may be, can never convince any excepting those who wish to be convinced.

Does this attitude of mind force us into thoroughgoing scepticism ? Must we then conclude that our search for Truth is utterly in vain ? Since conflicting ideas may be of equal value, must we infer that their value is *nil* ? On the contrary, religious ideas and convictions are not so easily adaptable that they can be fitted in to any kind of brain, like machine-made wheels which will fit any watch of a certain type made at a good

factory. They cannot be manufactured at will out of a mass of lifeless material. They are, and ought to be, an integral part of life itself. If we cannot work them out for ourselves, at least let us not accept any which our minds cannot assimilate. Our criterion is not objective; rather it is subjective, and consists in that deep sense of inward harmony which, according to William James, is the mystic token by which we may recognise Truth. The common saying that 'Every one takes his pleasure where he finds it' receives a deeper meaning in this connection. The obligation is laid upon each one of us of persevering in the search for Truth, until we find that part of it which we can make our own, and which we may infallibly recognise by the sense of abiding peace which will gradually enfold us. And when we are quite certain that we have seen 'the Star'—the right one, and no meteor—we must continue our journey in the darkness, in an unknown land, guided by its light alone. This was the course pursued by the Wise Men on their way to Bethlehem. Perhaps the seeker after the Ideal, as in the case of Marie Flournoy, will have to quit the beaten track along which kindly

hands have led him in his childhood. He may find it necessary to break away from many accepted traditions. This utter sincerity may involve suffering, not only to himself, but to those he loves. This is the price he must pay in order to learn the inward meaning of those words, 'The truth shall make you free.' For each soul the discovery of Truth involves self-knowledge and freedom from all external restraint.

The question about which Adèle Kamm and Marie Flournoy (as is so often the case among decided Christians) held such divergent views is one of such vital significance that each of us ought to take up a definite position with regard to it. But, at the same time, we have no right to say that either one or the other was mistaken. Each lived up to the light which was given her, and both of them finally reached the goal. We ought to bear this fact in mind, that their suffering was very different in character, and I incline to believe that there we may discover the underlying reason for their divergence of opinion. The one suffered bodily pain, and for her the way to victory lay in accepting her trial as a gift from God, and in being able to bless Him for it.

Mme. Flournoy, on the other hand, suffered from seeing the anguish of those she loved, and, in consequence, she felt a sense of bitter resentment at the apparent injustice of life. Selfish people may find the troubles of others more bearable than their own; but generous, sensitive, and loving souls like Mme. Flournoy are cast in a finer mould. She would have considered it blasphemous to thank God for having allowed her brother to perish at the hands of an ordinary murderer. This is a striking instance of the way in which psychological justification can be found for the most conflicting opinions.

We ought to take pains to acquire this point of view, though it may involve a lessened confidence in our own judgment and in the infallibility of our arguments, or even in the value of that which we have hitherto accepted as true beyond all dispute. Adèle Kamm felt this necessity very strongly; and she expressed it with the tactful delicacy of a loving heart in a beautiful letter written to Mr. Flournoy on the 19th of June 1910, acknowledging his gift of a copy of the *Recollections*:

‘I am keenly interested in the position which

Mme. Flourney takes up on this great question. I cannot help thinking how much I should have enjoyed talking over the problem of pain with her ; for the whole subject is one which troubles some minds to such an extent that a solution of some kind is really indispensable if they are to maintain their faith, and to suffer willingly, without bitterness and rebellion. I cannot say how much I admire Mme. Flourney for her profound love of God, which, I take it, is the reason why she tries to shift the responsibility for the problem of suffering away from God, thinking that it dishonours Him to bring Him in any way in touch with the burdens of the "creation which groaneth and travaileth in pain." It is a great mystery, and one which, *viewed at a distance, would have probably led me to the same conclusion as Mme. Flourney*,<sup>1</sup> for I cannot bear to see either people or animals suffer. But, in the realm of personal experience, I am forced to see the hand of God in every detail of my long trial.

'This brings us out of the region of theory, and into that of actual fact, which is full of in-

<sup>1</sup> The italics are the author's.

finite variety. I hardly like to tell you what I feel about suffering, because I do not suppose that my private opinion will carry any weight; the only thing I can say for it is that it helps me to suffer intelligently as well as trustfully, at those times when my physical pain is so agonising, that I feel that there simply must be a worthy end to it all if I am to accept it. *Every one must formulate his or her own ideas on the subject and must consider them all valuable, if they help us to make the best of life and to bear our sufferings with courage.*'

In the same letter Adèle Kamm goes on to expound her views on expiatory suffering in terms very similar to those which she used in the letter to Mr. F. G., which I quoted in the last chapter, and then she adds :

' . . . For people like me, who are confirmed invalids with no hope of recovery, this religious point of view has the advantage of giving us strength and even joy in bearing the pain, the sleepless nights, and the thousand and one deprivations of our lot; and it further teaches us to see material pleasures in the right light, a process which makes them appear very hollow,

and sometimes positively harmful. The reason why I am so happy is that I do not envy any one ; I have found the secret of pure joy, for I suffer with Christ in the holy cause of the redemption of humanity. Then I have other sources of joy as well, which are more beautiful and fragrant than any of the ordinary pleasures of health, and which I would like every one to possess, even if it involved their being ill for years. Fortunately, however, this is not an indispensable condition for those who want to comfort and help all who are fallen and out of the way, and who would show them the radiant glories of eternity in the midst of the shadows of this earthly life.

‘ Sometimes I feel that I am so much happier than those whom the world reckons the most fortunate, that I am almost ashamed of myself, and I am quite glad when from time to time my spirit fails me, and I realise my oneness in suffering with all who struggle and rebel. Oh, how well I understand them, when I think of all the blessings that I have received and how I have fallen ! I feel then that I am sister to all these unhappy souls, and my heart goes out to them, and I long to take them by the hand and dry their tears,

and show them Him who is the Saviour and the Life.

‘ But there is one thing that shadows my happiness : how can I be perfectly happy when I think of all these brothers and sisters of mine who are well-nigh overwhelmed by their burdens, and who must suffer in this life if the love of God is to save them for a glorious future ? But here again we must believe in God with all our hearts, and remember that life has a high and worthy aim when it is dedicated to the holy cause of doing good. Therefore, it is worth while to be born to suffer, and to die. Two years ago I thought that I had reached the highest experience of the spiritual life in welcoming the thought of death ; but I have learnt something more since then, and now I shall be grateful for life as long as I have an atom of strength left. I am looking forward with intense hopefulness to the life beyond, not only for the radiant joy of the nearer vision of God, but because I am sure that we shall not be at rest, but that we shall go on working for God just the same, only in a much higher and purer fashion. I suffer so much from my weaknesses and from the various hindrances which



constantly arise in work for God down here. Oh, it will be good, it will be glorious, to be able to serve Him without sinning !’

It is quite clear that Adèle Kamm’s views on suffering cannot possibly be reconciled with those of Marie Flournoy. The mind can scarcely conceive of God as a capricious Being who is sometimes absent from the world, and sometimes present in it, a God who has nothing to do with certain kinds of suffering, but who sends us others for the sake of discipline. But, if the mental instrument which we call logic rules inexorably over our limited intellects, it does not govern the world ; and a very happy thing it is that this is the case, for the world would be a very dull place if it did. It would lack the essential element of spontaneity.

It is very instructive to note this apparently irreconcilable difference of opinion between two earnest Christian women. It only shows us that people who hold widely diverging intellectual views may yet be one in spiritual fellowship, for in that realm alone can we find the solution of many a logical contradiction. It is the same in the world of thought as in the planet on which

we live ; if two travellers set out in exactly opposite directions to go round the world, they may, if they persevere, cross each other at the Antipodes, and meet at the end of the journey. Thus Adèle Kamm and Marie Flournoy set out in opposite directions in their quest for Truth, and, after following many devious paths, they finally arrived at the same point, the same acceptance of suffering, the same simple trust in the infinite love of God. One of them could say in the words of the poet :

‘Blesséd be thou, my God, who suffering giv’st  
Thy medicine for our impurity.’

While the other expressed herself thus : ‘Blesséd be Thou, my God, for this, that though Thou dost not inflict upon us unmerited sufferings, yet Thou dost come near us to help and console.’ Both were faithful to the supreme Truth, which is nothing else but Love.

I care very little for the opinion of others concerning the theological value of Adèle Kamm’s creed. I see clearly that, as far as she was concerned, she abundantly proved its worth, and that is enough for me. She carried out her conception of vicarious suffering in her own life,

and it is evident that the very fact of the manner in which she accepted and bore her pain had a redemptive influence upon those who came into touch with her. In a very real sense she was 'crucified with Christ,' and by virtue of this surrender she drew many of her fellow-sufferers to herself. She was the source of life to the sick and the rebellious, who imagined themselves banished from the company of the living.

Her gift of spiritual insight led her to discover something of religious value in the most unorthodox people. She remembered the words of Christ: 'In my Father's house are many mansions,' and she was in nowise disturbed when others chose a different one from that which she loved. After reading the *Memoirs of Marie Flournoy* she wrote to me thus: 'I should so much like either to see Mr. Flournoy or to write to him, for I want to tell him how much good this book has done me, in spite of the fact that Mme. Flournoy and I look at suffering from an entirely different standpoint. But the conclusion to which she came is one with which I heartily agree (for it always helps me so much), namely, that dogmas are only really valuable when they

draw our souls upwards to God, and impart an energy for purity and holiness. In this way the most divergent views become not only valuable but true . . . and so our spiritual horizon is enlarged, our convictions become more living, more truly our own, since their truth has been tested and proved; above all, the rich variety of method which God employs to win souls to Himself awakens within us a deeper sense of His power.

## CHAPTER XX

### AN ATTRACTIVE MINISTRY

‘For when God has all that He should have of thy heart, when thou art wholly given up to the obedience of the light and spirit of God within thee . . . then it is that everything thou dost is a song of praise, and the common business of thy life is a conforming to God’s Will on earth as angels do in heaven.’—WILLIAM LAW.

As the end of her life drew near, Adèle Kamm seemed to enter into a ‘far-stretching land,’ where her vision was purified, and her eyes were opened to see much that had hitherto been concealed. It would be understating the case to say that she grew absolutely tolerant towards those whose opinions differed from her own : tolerance is a negative virtue, and may very easily take on a shade of slight contempt. She had such an open mind, and such a loving heart, that, without any apparent effort, she had acquired the rare grace of intellectual charity. A firm believer in her own creed, which meant so much to her, she

could yet quite well understand that an entirely different form of faith might be more acceptable to other minds. 'The longer I live,' she wrote to Mr. H., 'the more I perceive that every expression of religious truth is imperfect, and that the most elementary form has a value of its own as well as the most enlightened. I see that there is really only one religion, *i.e.* that which Christ instituted when He said: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself"; Agnostics, Protestants, Roman Catholics, all are one in my sight. We are all brethren, weak and sinful creatures, for whom Christ died!'

An interesting visitor came to see her one day: a young man of twenty-three years of age, who had belonged to a society of free-thinkers, but who had resigned his connection with it owing to the disgust he felt at the bigoted spirit displayed by the other members. About that time a copy of Adèle Kamm's pamphlet, *Joyful in Tribulation*, fell into his hands; he read it, and was so much impressed by it, that he wrote to the young authoress, and requested the favour of a personal interview.

‘Poor boy, he has been an orphan since he was twelve years old, and has had no other moral guidance than that of some philosophical free-thinkers, whose one aim was to rob him of his only treasure, his faith,’ wrote Adèle Kamm to Mrs. H. R. on the 19th of May 1910. ‘Oh, if they could only have heard the broken, agonised cries of this wounded spirit, they might then have realised the havoc they had wrought! We talked for two hours, alone in my room, overshadowed by the Presence of God. To me it was indeed a red-letter day! It was most beautiful to see a young man making the decision to turn his back on sin, impelled by an earnest desire to become a power for good and an example to others, and I could not help thinking how glad his parents would have been to see this day. . . . Indeed, yesterday I felt that I was in the place of both mother and sister to this poor lad, and I know that he felt it too. He was so unhesitating in his confidence, and so resolute in his decision. Speaking of faith he told me that he found it impossible to believe with his reasoning faculty, but that after he had read my little book he threw his whole heart into a supreme act of faith; that

is to say, his restless conscience drove him to seek the Saviour's forgiveness, and the power to rise up and begin a new life. He was deeply distressed by intellectual doubts, but I told him that a faith based on instinct was just as valuable as one which could be confirmed by reason, and that the latter was rather to be considered a supreme blessing, a gift of God to those who had spent many years in His service.

‘I did not try to prove to him in any cut-and-dried fashion that Christ is the Son of God, and that the Bible is fully inspired. I simply said that no human being, either sceptic or believer, could assert or deny these things, but that *every belief which raises us above ourselves, which strengthens us in the struggle between good and evil, is a dogma before which we must bow in reverence, a sure refuge which we should never desert, though we must remember that this same tenet may be of no value to another person, but that some entirely different form may suit him better.*<sup>1</sup> When I saw the expression of intense relief which came over his face as I said this, I understood how wrong it would have been to have tried to prove to him the truth

<sup>1</sup> The italics are the author's.



of the Creeds. There comes a time when the disciples of "Free Thought" rebel against its narrowness, and turn to faith that they may be able to breathe freely. If they find the same restrictions in the other direction they will be chilled and thrown back on themselves. Oh, our responsibility is indeed great! The only safety lies in broad-mindedness, and there again the dangers are many. . . . How far may we be tolerant? It is a difficult ministry, difficult on account of the responsibility which we tacitly assume, whichever way we look at it; and when we reflect that the guidance of souls is in our hands, we should indeed feel quite overwhelmed were it not that we realise that we are only the instruments of the Divine Will.'

On the margin of that beautiful book by Mr. Wilfred Monod, *Silence and Prayer*, in which she found the echo of some of her most precious thoughts, among other remarks Adèle Kamm wrote on page 28: 'Oh, how divine a word is "Love"! It gathers up into itself the whole life of Christ, and the religion of which He is the Founder. Amid all kinds of conflict and struggle, social, economic, political, and religious, this

watchword rings out more insistently and more searchingly than ever : "Love God. Love one another." . . . There is one God in heaven, one family on earth ! Let us cast down everything that hinders love, above all every ecclesiastical barrier, and we shall find that all human beings are united in the bonds of brotherhood ; by their sufferings and their aspirations, by their sorrowful failure, their undying hope, they form one sacred family . . . a fellowship drawn together by the longing for affection, for love . . . if we can only learn to touch the sensitive place in every heart, our life will be useful and full of blessing !'

Further on again, in a comment on the remark of Mr. Wilfred Monod that 'the modern world of to-day is being drawn into a wonderful unity,' she said : 'I feel the truth of this thought very deeply, for it is the spring of all my feeling and all my thinking, and I am really very indignant with those Christians who think themselves more advanced than others ! In my opinion the world is divided into two classes : believers and unbelievers. May God pardon and illuminate the latter, but the former are all on the same level, from the one who has the simplest and most ele-

mentary form of faith, up to the one who lives in habitual communion with God. . Much will be required of him to whom much has been given, and God alone will make the balance right. It is quite possible that those who think themselves the first will find that they are the last, and *vice versâ*. I am always afraid, since the publication of my booklet, that people will set me upon a pedestal which I do not deserve.'

Conscious that the only work which endures is that which is wrought in the spirit of love, she quietly set aside every kind of controversy which leads to bitterness and division of opinion. We have already seen with what energy the Superior of the 'Coccinelles' fought against the sects which tried to take possession of the lay Order which she directed, and how she insisted that this union of invalids should not fall into the hands of any one school of thought, but that each member, whether believer or sceptic, Roman Catholic, Protestant, or Jew, should be free to express his or her own views with absolute sincerity. She became quite hot with vexation one day when some one suggested to her that she might hint to a certain member of the Union

that her 'message' was not viewed with approval in certain quarters; she replied that she did not see that she had 'any right to criticise the messages, and that the right to guide our convictions belonged to God alone.'

Sectarianism was hateful to her. She agreed with Miss Schlumberger on this point, and wrote thus to her on the 5th of July 1910:

'I am somewhat afraid lest our Invalids' Union should be considered at Leysin as a form of exaggerated piety, and this thought grieves me sorely, and makes me almost angry. No, our one aim is to comfort people who are ill, and if you take up the secretaryship of the Leysin branch, dear friend, you are absolutely free to help the patients in any way you like, even if you do not mention the subject of religion in the circular letters. It is our custom here to speak freely of religious matters because our members are so depressed, and ask us to help them to regain their faith, and to sustain them in their struggle. We find too in our personal experience that joy in suffering springs from one source alone: perfect peace, the result of entire trust in God. But I would on no account see our union become a kind of fanatical sect; for, so far as I am personally

concerned, I belong to the Established Church, and besides, I respect every one, whether they be fanatics, agnostics, Roman Catholics, Jews, or members of the Established Church. I think we ought all to belong to *one church*, that of love, both of God and of our brethren, and that there is nothing beyond that worth a moment's notice ! This is our great desire for the Invalids' Union ; and those who like to write about the love of God are welcome, and those who prefer not to speak of that subject at all are left quite free, and can help the invalids in some other way.'

The thought that she could be looked upon as a little fanatic vexed her to such a degree that she protested her innocence most vigorously, and wrote the following day in a second letter to Miss Schlumberger :

'I was quite bewildered and heart-broken at the idea that the Leysin people could consider me, and our beloved Union, at all fanatical. No indeed, I feel I am unworthy, worldly, and full of faults, *and very far from the state of gloomy perfection which usually accompanies that type of exaggerated piety.*'<sup>1</sup>

There may be, in her writings rather than

<sup>1</sup> The italics are the author's.

in her letters, among much that is charmingly natural and spontaneous, an occasional trace of the stereotyped phraseology of our religious literature; or again, she may now and then use some of those unavoidable metaphors drawn from the pastoral life of the Hebrew people, but this is only because one would need to be a genius to find new and living expressions for present-day religious experience. Certainly it would be too much to expect from a young girl who was unversed in the art of literature. We must learn to understand that when she used conventional religious phrases she was trying to pour out the fervent and glowing experiences with which her heart was overflowing.

Indeed, the sanctimonious religious phraseology of the fanatic never came naturally to her. You only had to hear her speak, or to see her smile, to feel convinced of that! She greeted all her visitors with a radiant smile. She even smiled at God, and that was one of her methods of prayer. She said one day, 'We must smile at God through our tears; we ought to smile up at Him in the hour of death!' She faced the problems of life and death with steadfast gravity, but after all

she was still a young and merry girl, full of playfulness, brimming over with innocent fun. As we have seen she insisted that gaiety was an invalid's duty, and she carried out this principle in the happiest and most natural manner. This is by no means the least profitable element in the example she has left behind her. Winsome Christianity is a great blessing, and it would be good for us to learn to smile at God and at man. We profess to desire to live up to the apostolic injunction, 'Rejoice evermore!' but, alas, the atmosphere around us is so gloomy that our influence is rather that of the proverbial wet blanket! If a duty is not disagreeable we wonder whether it can be a duty at all! Too often we live on the marshy levels where the dank mists of depression are for ever brooding. We give way to tedium, under the impression that we are leading a religious life. Never were we more mistaken; stuck fast in the Slough of Despond, a radiant faith is impossible. Beyond dispute, dulness is utterly inconsistent with the spirit of our holy religion. In the midst of her suffering Adèle Kamm vanquished it completely, and this was not the least of her achievements.

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF ADÈLE KAMM'S RELIGIOUS LIFE

‘The end of all God’s dealings with us is to make us more purely human, and he is most human who has the largest fellowship, the most open soul.’—ALEXANDER MACKENNAL.

WHEN the physician Godfried van Haga was summoned to the bedside of Lydwina of Schiedam, who at the age of fifteen was attacked by a mysterious disease, he declined to prescribe for her in any way. All he said was : ‘The hand of God is upon this child. He will work miracles through her. Would to Heaven that she were my daughter ! I would gladly give the weight of her head in gold for this favour were it for sale !’<sup>1</sup> Something of the same sort might have been said of Adèle Kamm. The doctors of Lausanne and Geneva were powerless to help her ; they were

<sup>1</sup> J. K. Huysmans, *Sainte Lydwine de Schiedam*, p. 77 ; Paris, Plon. In the above-mentioned work, on p. 294, Huysmans gives a list of the saints who have found their vocation in suffering.



amazed at the energy with which she resisted the attacks of a malady which usually carries off the strongest people after a short illness. They too might have exclaimed, 'The hand of God is upon this child!' We cannot fail to recognise the close connection between Adèle Kamm and the saintly women whom Huysmans describes as having 'a vocation for expiatory suffering.' Particularly is this the case when we compare the life of Adèle Kamm with that of Lydwina; and the analogy would be still more complete could we eliminate from the biography of the Dutch saint of the fourteenth century that element of the miraculous with which either tradition, or the imagination of pious chroniclers, has surrounded her pallet. In both lives there is the same triumphant faith in the midst of agonising suffering, the same abiding communion with God, the same gift of spiritual attraction and power to heal the diseases of the soul.

Adèle Kamm's spiritual state during the last years of her life exactly resembles the description given by St. Teresa of those souls who, after long and toilsome ascent along the path of pain and sanctification, have at last reached the seventh

circle of the 'Interior Castle.' These blessed spirits live a renewed life. They have been purified from every vestige of selfishness. They accept suffering with joy, and long for it as a privilege. They have risen above the stage of fervent longing for death and for the immediate enjoyment of eternal felicity.

'Now,' says St. Teresa, 'they are so filled with a burning desire to serve our Lord, to glorify His name, to be of use to some soul, that, far from desiring death, they long to live for years, even in the midst of the most terrible suffering, happy to procure at that price some of that praise and glory which He alone is worthy to receive. Even if they knew that on being released from the body they would at once enjoy the immediate vision of God, or if the thought of the bliss of the departed came into their minds, none of these things would move them, for they do not pant after this vision and this glory. Their highest honour is to be able to render some service to the Crucified.'<sup>1</sup> They do not seek to penetrate the regions of mystical rapture and inward ecstasy,

<sup>1</sup> Saint Teresa, *Œuvres Mystiques*, published by Father Marcel Bouix, vol. iii. p. 525.

for they have the satisfying Presence of Christ in their hearts. They can remain in the world, and live and work there, like St. Teresa herself, who, right up to the end of her career, carried on so much practical activity.

It is clear that Adèle Kamm reached this 'seventh heaven' without passing through all the intermediate stages described by St. Teresa. Her religious life developed in a simple and straightforward manner. Though she was painfully aware of her faults, she was never paralysed by a morbid conscience. 'Forward!' was her oft-repeated watchword. 'If I did badly yesterday, I will try to do better to-morrow.' The question of her personal salvation did not trouble her at all. She thought so much about other people that she had no time to be constantly examining the state of her own soul, or of her hopes for eternity. She was not given to morbid introspection, though she knew how to retire within herself. She never sought to penetrate the mysteries of solitary religious ecstasy. She had no desire for spiritual delights which she could not share with others, and she took as much trouble to keep in touch with the life of her

day as a nun does to live apart from it ! Forced by necessity to lead a secluded life, by an effort of will she became free in spirit. We have seen how much it cost her to keep in close touch with life. All the strength and fervour of her soul was thrown into action. She was more like Martha than Mary ; she was indeed a saint, but a saint of the Protestant order.

Even her prayer took the form of action. She did not need to put it into words. In her humility she thought that this was a weakness ; she confessed it in a long letter written on the 14th of March 1910, just a year to a day before her death. In a spiritual sense this letter was her ‘last will and testament.’ When she wrote it for her family and friends, *known and unknown*, she thought that it would be read after she had passed away. ‘I am writing these pages (perhaps they will be only a few lines, for I feel very weak) without any very special purpose, excepting that I want to say this one thing : I want to tell all who, whether far or near, have helped to cheer me in my helplessness, how very very grateful I am to them ! Yes, to you all, poor and rich, old and young, Protestants, Roman Catholics, Jews, and Agnostics, invalids

and strong folk, to you all I say, "Thank you, thank you," from the bottom of my heart for all that you have given me! You have all helped me more than you can imagine during these years of painful discipline; I know that I have said this to many of you in the course of conversation, but during these days of outward inaction I want to allow myself the luxury of talking to you on paper about all the human aid I have received in my life, and I am writing it down on purpose, for I want you to read it after I am gone, and to find it a means of cheer and encouragement.<sup>2</sup>

This 'testament' of Adèle Kamm's is divided into short chapters, one of which is headed 'Prayer.' With her usual humility she confesses her 'inability to pray,' without seeming in the least to realise that her way of praying by doing good to others was the highest form of prayer which can be conceived.

### *Prayer*

*'It is to you, my dear friends, that I owe my experience of habitual communion with God.'*<sup>1</sup> I have a confession to make to you: I am but a

The italics are the author's.

little child in the realm of prayer which leads us into the deepest secrets of the spiritual kingdom. I have gone only a few steps along this road, and I must frankly confess that I do not know how to use this great power which lies within the reach of us all. It often distresses me that I have neither inclination nor, I might say, physical strength, nor the time to give myself up to prayer as I ought; for I feel very deeply that it is a great lack in my spiritual life. In the feverish, strenuous life of the present day, when the claims of activity are all engrossing, it is very rare to find people who are willing to give time to prayer, and I am sure that this omission explains much of the spiritual poverty and lack of "grip" in the life of the Church. I think that it would be almost ideal to be deprived of the power of writing and of speech so that I might have a deeper inward experience, and especially that I might give myself to prayer, to learning its hidden beauty, and in this way to be of more use to humanity than by all my activity. *But I seem utterly unable to pray in set forms at all, either mentally or aloud,* and so sometimes I have to comfort myself by thinking that God uses me in other ways, for after all I

am always working for Him, and the days are never long enough for the service I would like to render.

‘ But God has very graciously met my need, and, as I am incapable of observing set times and forms of devotion, He has led me into almost unbroken communion with Himself. I would not exactly call it prayer, but rather the Holy Spirit, working so powerfully in my heart, that all my thoughts and actions, whether of a trifling nature, or guided by a serious, loving, and spiritual purpose, are wrought in an atmosphere in which the spiritual and material are so wonderfully blended together that they can no longer be clearly distinguished from each other, and I myself can really hardly tell which is which ! This experience brings me so much inward joy and peace, and also success in my work, that it quite consoles me for my inability to pray, for I feel and know that the Holy Spirit unites me closely to God.

‘ As the Holy Spirit is always guiding and inspiring me, it is not surprising that a blessing rests upon my work, and that all my most beautiful dreams have been exceeded by reality. For the last year I have been living in such an atmo-

sphere of miracles that I can only bless and adore God for His wonderful works ; to describe them is impossible. I feel that I cannot grasp all this joy and blessing ; it is too rich and too varied. It seems as though everything were bursting into blossom ; it is a kind of spiritual awakening—success crowns everything, my desires, my aspirations, my work, my friendships, every single thing I have desired for my family and for my friends. I think of each one every day, and the more their number increases, the more intense is my joy, and I feel as though I were being borne aloft, supported by a garland of beautiful flowers. . . . Your love and thought and prayer uphold me. I realise it more fully than ever before. Oh, I must say thank you, thank you, with all my heart ! and do remember that *each one of you has a warm corner in my heart, and also in my communion with God.* I want to say that this applies even to those to whom I cannot write, and who cannot come to see me. For it is *you* who help me to live so near to heaven. If I had to lead a solitary existence I should be far too weary to live an intense spiritual life.’

‘To you all, dear friends, I owe this sense of



abiding communion with God . . . remember that each of you has a warm place in my heart, and therefore in my communion with God.'

These words are very suggestive, for they show us that the second part of the Supreme Law, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,' was, in Adèle Kamm's mind, so intimately connected with the first, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,' that she made no distinction between them. Surely in this she attained the height of the Christian ideal.

Although Adèle Kamm was much attached to the different clergymen who came to see her regularly, yet she loved to tease them, just as she teased her doctors. One day one of them was urging her to pray aloud with the young free-thinker of whom we have already spoken, and she replied, smiling gaily : 'I really could not do it ; I leave all that sort of thing to the clergy !' However, it is not necessary to be a clergyman in order to offer set prayer to God, either mentally or aloud. There are many Christian people to whom this kind of prayer comes quite naturally, but others find it impossible. Are they therefore wrong? God knows our inmost thoughts

better than we, and does He not understand us before we have said a word to Him ? When we turn to Him, wearied with all the sorrow and struggle of our earthly life, He lifts us on the wings of prayer into that eternal region of peace and mystery, where all human speech is stilled. From this point of view prayer is a brief vision of ' the things which are unseen and eternal.' Such an experience is sufficient to assure us of the reality of the inward life, and to enable us to return to the level of ordinary daily duty, quickened and restored in spirit.

But there is another method of prayer open to those who, like Adèle, have reached the ' seventh heaven,' from which all anxiety and undisciplined longing, all regret, and even the disquiet caused by the most refined selfishness, have been for ever banished. In that region, inhabited only by elect souls, prayer is an undying fire ; it is offered without ceasing ; and so closely is it blended with life that these pure souls find it so natural that they are scarcely conscious of its presence. It permeates the humblest actions and fills them with the atmosphere of eternity. It does not so much bring Divine help to a fainting, dispirited

soul, as come into living touch with a soul already radiant with the eternal glory, a life so generous that it can hold back no spiritual blessings for its own use. It shines through the soul, as a sunbeam shines through a prism of finest crystal, breaking up the light into the most glorious colours. The soul which prays on this wise is a mediator. All that it receives is at once given out to others, lavished on them out of the rich treasures of a loving heart. The self-life has been destroyed, and the one concern is to pray for others. Adèle Kamm's prayer was of this character. It would indeed be difficult to imagine a higher or more perfect expression of communion with the Unseen.

Her strength lay in her attitude of faith. She believed in God, she believed in man. This spirit sustained her in all her work and activity. She said so herself in her last message to her friends.

### *Faith*

'If any one were to ask me, "What is *the* thing in your life that gives you the purest happiness?" I should answer, "Faith in God, and faith in humanity." But I am sure that this reply would cause a slight shade of amusement to flicker over

your face. "Yes, indeed," you would say, "that is all very well for a child who is sheltered from the world, away from all its strain and stress!" And sometimes it has made me smile to hear people talk like that, but I have never tried to answer them, for we alone know (each of us in our own way) how strange and wonderful the circumstances of our lives have been. No other soul knows that inward history of lonely conflicts, of crushing blows received and borne in silence, or perhaps of painful discipline, anguish, and disappointment, which has made up our secret life by the time we have reached the age of twenty or twenty-four! It is indeed quite unnecessary that these facts *should* be known, the one thing that does matter is to find out whether we are making progress in the school of faith or not . . . "that is the question." Well, as far as I am concerned, my chief happiness lies in this: I am always able to trust more and more. For a long time I have been rejoicing in the experience of absolute trust in God, as He is revealed in Jesus Christ, and for the last two years I have learnt to feel the same towards mankind.

‘ Every human soul needs warmth. How many frozen hearts there are in the world who really long for warmth, but who, miserable at not finding it, freeze up other people as well as themselves by chilling all their warm impulses of faith and trust ! And this accounts for that cold and formal spirit which we sometimes find prevailing among a whole nation, or in a certain section of society, or perhaps in a single family circle. Often, however, it is the other way round, and then the result is truly wonderful. All kinds of things may be infectious, but the infection of faith is the best and happiest and most beautiful of all. Christ’s spirit of love is catching, for men’s hearts were cold beyond belief until He came “with healing in His wings.” You, dear people, my relatives and friends, who have filled my invalid life with warmth and brightness, either consciously or unconsciously, you have been obeying Christ’s law of love, and so you have made me the happiest soul alive ! ’

The grace of a trustful spirit is exceedingly rare in these days. How many vigorous and healthy young people are full of distrust towards themselves, other people, and life in general !

Can they be surprised that the life in which they do not believe trembles beneath their feet, and they feel themselves sinking in the quicksands of hopeless doubt ? Adèle Kamm doubted nothing. She believed in the work of her hands. She believed in the power of goodness. She believed in the good-will of all those with whom she had to do in such a way that they found it impossible to betray her confidence. As her physical strength declined the inward forces of her faith and hope renewed her vigour on another plane. She was borne along by the fervour with which she threw herself into her work. And her enthusiasm was infectious. 'It is worth while lying in bed for years,' wrote one of her correspondents to me, 'to come into touch with such a saintly soul. She has made our invalid lives so rich and fruitful !' When we look at this transfiguration of disease we may well pause and wonder whether it is sickness at all ! Indeed, this helpless invalid overflowed with the most abundant spiritual health that we can imagine.

## CHAPTER XXII

### LAST DAYS

‘After this, I beheld until they were come into the land of Beulah, where the sun shineth night and day. Here, because they were weary, they betook themselves awhile to rest. . . . Then the pilgrims got up, and walked to and fro. But how were their ears now filled with heavenly noises, their eyes delighted with celestial visions!’—*The Pilgrim’s Progress*.

DURING the summer of 1910 Adèle Kamm’s condition grew worse. She had an attack of dry pleurisy which affected both lungs, and on the 18th of July she wrote to Mrs. H. R. : ‘I am unable to move an inch, and I have great difficulty in breathing ; but my heart is holding out well, and they think that I shall get over this illness, for I do not feel very weak in spite of a temperature of 104°. Every one is amazed at my vitality, and I wonder myself how much it will take to kill me ! However, I feel so tranquil, so freed from earthly distractions, so wonderfully upheld through these days of suffering (though

I believe no one could bear more !), that yesterday, as I listened to the hum of life outside, I felt there was still so much to be done, that in spite of being so ill I had no moral right to desert my post.'

Goethe has said that a man cannot die until he is willing to do so, and as far as Adèle Kamm was concerned this paradoxical saying seemed to be literally true. For a long time her doctors had been completely baffled by this extraordinary 'case.' According to all the well-established laws of medical science she should have died long before ! She only kept herself alive by sheer force of will, by the fixed determination to live for others, to fulfil her task right up to the very end. When she had pulled through this attack of pleurisy she declared she was quite satisfied. It had been suggested that she should have a trained nurse, but she had not agreed to this, for she dreaded losing the sweet privacy of her rose-coloured room, and above all 'the precious solitude of the night.' 'At night I enjoy much inward peace,' she wrote, 'for I feel so wonderfully upheld, and I hope to pass away when I am quite alone, and full of the joy of going



home to God, without seeing the sorrow of those whom I love better than myself. And I love to be alone even when I feel very ill, for I have no fear; whereas if any one sits up with me my peace is disturbed, as I depend then on other people rather than upon God and myself.'

During the acute stage of this illness she had been obliged to sit up in bed day and night, which was an almost intolerable strain for the vertebrae of the neck, which were affected by the disease. As she grew better she was able to lie down without feeling choked, and the relief was intense. Her throat, however, had become inflamed owing to the weakening of the neck vertebrae, but she said that she had found 'a splendid way' of easing that by inhaling menthol from time to time. Then the disease broke out in fresh places. She had several internal abscesses, but these she called 'quite ordinary troubles,' and she did not pay much attention to them. 'In fact,' she wrote in all seriousness, 'I am scarcely ill just now.'

However, this period of comparative respite from acute suffering did not last long, and on the 1st of August she wrote to Mrs. H. R. :

‘This morning Dr. M. came to see me ; he is acting as *locum tenens* for my own doctor, Dr. V., who went away yesterday for a fortnight’s holiday. Dr. M. had attended me for my neck trouble, but he had never sounded my lungs. He was very bright and cheerful until after he had sounded me, but then he looked so sad that I felt quite touched by his expression. After he had gone I found out indirectly that he said as he was leaving that considering the state of my chest, he could not understand what kept me alive, unless it was energy, and that at any moment my breathing might stop altogether. *I am so glad to know that ; it has given me fresh courage.*<sup>1</sup> It only confirms what I had guessed myself ; and as I do not feel at all weak I may expect to be active up to the last. I don’t think my energy will be exhausted yet, for I feel overflowing with life. Evidently it is involuntary, or else it has become so habitual that I am scarcely conscious of exerting it. What I *do* feel is that the pain is almost unbearable, but I think that I am getting used to this extremely acute kind, and I am learning to bear it better,

<sup>1</sup> The italics are the author’s.

and above all I think it is affecting my temper less !

‘ However, I do suffer very much at times, particularly when, for hours or even for whole days, I feel as though I were poisoned right through ; and, try as I will, I cannot shake off these most disagreeable sensations. When I am like this I can’t see properly. I tremble all over, and feel great distress, and I am not myself at all. I have tried everything I can think of, moving and talking, but nothing does any good ; and then, suddenly, in a minute or two, everything gets right again, and I wonder whether I can have been dreaming ! I feel much depressed at these times and terribly overwrought and nervous, but rather than let myself go, or give way to tears, which would only increase my misery, I find that the best thing to do is to write, and so to force my thoughts into a useful channel. It is the only relief I have discovered as yet. So, dearest, you see why I have sent you such long letters, and how much you help me. I often write at night for the same reason. I have got piles of MSS. which have helped me over these difficult places. On the same day on which I last

wrote to you, I began to think about a promised Christmas letter,<sup>1</sup> and the following night I wrote it straight off. I was delighted to find that the entire Committee was pleased with it, and Mrs. N. insisted on coming to see me herself, to tell me of their gratitude. She is an angel! We have worked together a good deal over various plans for helping sick people.

‘Now that I am better visitors venture into my room more often, and I don’t know what to do, for I should like a little quiet time to finish off some of the things which are still on my mind. All my friends, whom I love so dearly, and who have given me such long-continued affection, want to see me now that the attack of pleurisy has passed, for they know that I am very ill. I scarcely know how to manage it, for there are such a lot of them! I think I shall try to see two or three a day. If you could see me now, you would almost wonder whether I am ill after all! There is nothing around me to suggest illness, and the room is rose-coloured, bright, and gay with flowers. I have not changed at all, save

<sup>1</sup> Adèle Kamm had been asked to write this letter (which ought to be printed) for the patients in the hospitals.

that I am thinner.<sup>1</sup> The worst of it is that I still love to laugh and chatter nonsense, and that is bad for my chest and for my mouth, but that doesn't matter ! Just fancy, Hélène, how fortunate it is that my tongue is all right ; that and my stomach are the two parts which are in order ! Sometimes I can't help laughing when I think what my visitors must feel when they look at this smiling, pink-beribboned doll, and she suddenly begins to talk about the gravest problems, and discourses to them about heaven ! It must be very funny ! What a pity, Hélène, that you can't see me !'

The heart trouble grew worse at the beginning of September. The pulsations were so irregular that the doctors thought death must be very near. Adèle had to sit up and lean forward, and this position increased the inflammation of the vertebrae, and an abscess formed in the neck. 'It is very difficult to die,' she wrote on the 7th of September to Mrs. R. Then she

<sup>1</sup> Till then indeed Adèle, though much emaciated in body, had scarcely changed in appearance. Her features still looked wonderfully young and fresh ; we see this in her last photograph, a full-face one, taken by Mr. H. It is the one which forms the frontispiece to this book. Her face did not change much until just before the end.

added : ' If you could only imagine how quiet and happy I feel. . . . I am already on the other side of the dark river. I do not believe the passing will be difficult, but if it is, this beautiful peace will accompany me. I suffer much from the internal abscesses which give me constant pain, and my neck hurts me very much, owing to the fact that I am obliged to sit up day and night. . . . My mother and sister are angels ! They nurse me so well that I am positively spoiled. . . . I think much of you, my darling, and love you ! You know that I am not writing letters at all now, and so I want to express all my tender love for you in this one, which may be the last I shall be able to send you, and to tell you, what you already know very well, that you have made this last year of my life very beautiful, and that you will do the same for many other sufferers, if God spares you. . . . Then we shall meet again where there is no more pain, no more separation.'

As soon as ever she had rallied slightly she took the opportunity of writing an encouraging message in one of the circular letters of the Invalids' Union.

‘22nd September 1910.

‘. . . For weeks I have been terribly ill with an attack of arhythmia of the heart, and then I had a succession of abscesses, the pain of which exhausted me to such an extent that I looked like a ghost when I began to get better about a week ago. This accounts for my silence. I have enjoyed the relief of being able to lie down for the last week, and I am in less pain. For the first time since the 1st of July I do not need to fight for my life, and I cannot tell you what a comfort it is! People say that I look better already, and I have picked up enough strength to write the most pressing letters.’

This partial recovery was not much to boast of. Poor child, she was easily satisfied, and she added :

‘You will be amazed to learn that during this good week (*sic*!) I have had a temperature of 102° to 104°, and I have had shivering fits every two hours (caused by the state of the lungs). However, this fever has exhilarated rather than depressed me, for I am seeing the bright side of everything, and I feel happy and good-tempered, which was not the case during the preceding

weeks. Oh! it *is* delightful to feel sweet-tempered again, it makes everything run smoothly. My mind is full of all sorts of happy memories, and this beautiful autumn weather has a charm all its own. I feel so grateful for these few days of respite.'

'A few days of respite'; she could not expect more than that in such a condition of health. No one could imagine what kept her alive! On the 12th of October she wrote to Mrs. H. R.: 'It is true that I cannot swallow anything solid—I can only drink. . . . But I am gaining strength, I look better, and perhaps, after all, I may still live through the winter. . . . I believe that I shall get along quite well, right up to the very end.'

Sure of entire sympathy from Mrs. R., who agreed with her about the necessity of facing 'cold reality,' and of allowing no charming illusions to blind her to the truth, Adèle confided to her all her weakness. The knowledge that she was absolutely understood gave her great comfort. When she had to deal with people who were less brave than herself she showed the same gallant front, and she found real pleasure in



copying out the following poem by Mme. M. Melley, which was partly the echo of her own private feelings :

‘I would have the heart be brave—the soul be strange to fear,  
I would have each man support his cross unbent,  
And if faith reel, I would have the Lord incline His  
ear,  
And none but He, to cries of grief long-pent.

Whate’er the vulture be that gnaws our heart within,  
Let not the face the hidden anguish prove,  
And God will pardon us this sorrow’s crafty sin,  
If He can spare a sigh for those we love.

And is the load they lift on earth so light that we  
Must give to them as well our griefs to bear?  
If some gay smile of ours can make their darkness flee,  
Should we not give the smile and hide the tear?

I would have the heart be brave—the soul be strange to fear,  
I would have each man support his cross unbent,  
And if faith reel, I would have the Lord incline His  
ear,  
And none but He, to cries of grief long-pent.’

Time after time during October and November it seemed as though the end had come. Adèle’s body appeared to be poisoned in every part. On the 4th of November she wrote : ‘ On the Friday evening of last week my condition was critical, and I felt that I was very near the last conflict,

unless I could rally. During the night I felt easier, and since then I have been able to breathe much better. I am very weak, but somewhat rested. . . . That is what I have to report, and I am finding that I need plenty of courage. I should not wish any one to have a similar power of resistance, but God knows how much we ought to bear. . . . I am full of deep peace, I am able to laugh whenever I feel a little better, and I am so thankful that my life has been like this. Oh ! I love God more than ever, but I feel rather weary, both for myself and for my dear ones who are more tired out by these crises than by any amount of hard work. I shall be glad when the Saviour takes me in His arms to welcome me into that land, which is the only true Fatherland. . . . Nevertheless, I am very happy here.'

She refused as long as she could to take anything to deaden the pain. Narcotics had a bad effect upon her, with the exception of veronal. She had a dose of this, on the evening of November the 7th. The next morning every one thought that she was sinking. Later on, she managed to give a cheerful description of the incident: 'I had such a bad night that I could not sleep, nor did

the veronal take effect till 6 A.M. Helped by the fatigue of the preceding night I fell into such a deep sleep that I did not wake until 10 A.M. For two hours I had been conscious that there were people in the room, and that perhaps I ought to open my eyes, but I really had no strength left. So, when I did open them, it was a great surprise to see Dr. V. preparing a caffeine injection, and mother and Henrietta leaning over me and crying. It appears that I was so very pale that they thought that I should not wake again. Really I almost wanted to laugh, for the good sleep had refreshed me ; and I did not feel in the least inclined to die from exhaustion, for the constant fever keeps my pulse going quite pleasantly.'

She knew, however, that this false strength would not keep her going for long, and she made all her final preparations. On the 14th of November, in her clearest handwriting, she wrote a last word of farewell to her beloved 'Coccinelles':

'MY VERY DEAR FRIENDS,—I can only write a few lines, to send my love to you all, and to tell you my news. I have been very ill since the last

circular letter was sent off, and then last week I had four better days, during which I had the great joy of seeing a few friends, and of writing in the circular letters. Since yesterday, however, I have been feeling very weary, and this morning my lungs were in such a state that I was very ill again. I have been thinking of all the sufferers, known and unknown, whom God will soon take to Himself, and who know this peculiar kind of weariness, which is after all very soothing, for it softens all pain and sensation. I feel now how unwise people are who wait to think of God until they are seriously ill. On the whole, we live at such times as these on our past experience, for the least effort, especially of an abstract nature, is too much for us ; reading becomes impossible, and we ought to have the Presence of God in our hearts before we reach such a state ! I think this is the immediate earthly reward for having sought God when we were in full vigour and prosperity. This capital has been accumulating in a safe place, and now it yields a high rate of interest ! . . . Poor, poor unhappy souls, who wait for a catastrophe before they raise their eyes to Heaven ! I am not saying this to the members

of our Union, who are exemplary in their faith and patience, but I am thinking of all those who are indifferent to these things.

*‘15th November.*

‘I will finish off this evening, as I am very ill, and extremely weak. My warmest love to you all, my dear friends.—Your      ADELE KAMM.’

She was indeed ‘very ill’; her condition defied description! The invisible forces which for so many years had been sapping her life away now united their efforts and attacked her everywhere at once. On the 5th of December she wrote to her intimate friend. It was the last letter she penned; it is a pitiful document, scarcely legible, where we can almost trace, in the shape of the contorted, twisted characters, the terrible pain which she endured with such heroic patience.

Even in these depths of suffering she thought only of others. After having given her friend details as to her health, and having said good-bye to her, she added: ‘Now I quite hope to live through the holiday season, and I shall hold out as long as I can, for I would not like to leave mother and Henrietta alone just now. However,

I have grown so much weaker that we do not look beyond the day. As for me, *Helène*, Heaven is close at hand, coming ever nearer, in all its glory. You will think of your sister *Adèle* as one who has been wonderfully fortunate and blest, who has been privileged to arrive quickly at the end of this life and its burdens, and who has been very happy during these last three years.'

It is a striking picture : the heroic girl suffering a martyrdom of pain, sustained by the sense that 'Heaven is close at hand,' and yet struggling with all her might against the merciful release of death, because she did not wish to leave her dear ones sorrowing. She struggled on for more than three months, with her poor body in a condition beyond description. She managed to preserve a flicker of life by keeping absolutely still, but the whole of the right side (on which she had to lie on account of the state of the *vertebrae*) was an open wound.

During this period of long-drawn-out agony she never once faltered. She lay there in a state of heavenly peace. As her body succumbed little by little to the ravages of illness so her soul

shone out with soft radiance. For her Heaven was indeed 'close at hand.' She was already nearly there. Once she thought that her last hour had come after an attack of arhythmia. 'What a beautiful day it will be for me,' she said, 'for I am at length going to see so many of those I love, for I have more friends in Heaven than on earth.'

Her mother never left her now, fearing the end might come in her absence. Adèle was always fully conscious, and she followed her about the room with her eyes, murmuring a loving word now and again; sometimes she even managed to joke a little in order to comfort her. 'If the doctors wanted to mend me,' she said one day, 'where would they find any sound parts? I have two arms and two legs. Nothing else!' And her mother replied, 'There is your heart, my darling, and your eyes!' Indeed, all the life that still remained was concentrated in her luminous eyes, which looked so terribly big in her poor thin, white face. On the 3rd of March I was allowed to see her once more, and I was happy enough to be able to give her some news which pleased her. With an effort she lifted her

transparent hand and held it out to me. In a few touching words she told me how glad she was ; her voice sounded very happy, and she looked at me with an expression which I shall never forget.

At last, on Thursday the 9th of March, she entered on the last agony, but her iron constitution held out five more days. She suffered terribly ; for two whole nights she groaned without intermission. Otherwise she lay in a half-comatose condition. She was given powerful injections of pantopon, but as soon as she awoke after the narcotic she was fully conscious. On the Monday, as the pain was beyond endurance, they gave her a still stronger injection. Adèle herself thought that she would not wake again. ‘Are you ready?’ she said to her mother, ‘I am ; I shall wake up in Heaven. Promise me you will not cry, think of my joy!’ And then she added : ‘Kiss me once more . . . but on my forehead!’ A few hours later, however, she woke again, and was almost disappointed at finding that she was still on earth. She did not wish to hurt her dear ones, and said, ‘You must not think that I am not glad to be with you a little longer’ On the



Tuesday morning <sup>1</sup> she was sleeping heavily under the influence of a sedative, and for a moment it looked as though she were going to wake again. Her mother, feeling that she could not endure to see her suffering, prayed God to put an end to her martyrdom. Suddenly towards eleven o'clock the drawn features relaxed, she smiled with one last look of ineffable sweetness, then the peace of death enfolded her. All was over.

<sup>1</sup> 14th March 1911.

‘O Death, where is thy sting?  
O Grave, where is thy victory?’

All was over. The long struggle had come to an end at last. The victory was won. This death had been so long expected, and, one might almost add, so much desired, by those who loved Adèle Kamm, that when it came it was surrounded by an atmosphere of triumphant peace. For days and months we had watched her as she hovered between life and death like a lily whose short life is over, and who droops gently towards her mother-earth. The merest breath of air will be enough to carry off the faded white blossom ; but as long as it is untouched it retains its graceful beauty.

What was the mighty hidden power which bound this frail girl to life with a firmness which was little short of miraculous ? She still tried to smile, and spoke nothing but loving, courageous words when it seemed as though every breath she drew must be her last. She was among us, and

yet already we felt that she was infinitely above us. We waited and watched her drifting away into Eternity, and upon her face we caught the reflection of the Eternal Dawn.

And now the last link has been broken. But is it true that she has left us? No! our blessed dead do not leave us; they live on in our lives. We feel their influence more fully when they are no longer with us in the body. Adèle Kamm still lives for all who loved her. Her pure gaze follows us, and draws us upwards. Her hand is in ours to lead us into the Light. Her life is even now an example of goodness. She has overcome the fever of unsatisfied desire, the bitterness of regret, and every kind of suffering and anxiety—everything, in short, which has power to harass and torment us in this world. Her deliverance from fear was so complete that henceforth nothing could disturb her serenity. She was free, absolutely free. And which of us can say that of ourselves? Humbly, and we might even say unconsciously, she fulfilled her sacred task. She proved that we are *not* the creatures of circumstance, nor the sport of Destiny, since the weakest of human beings, in simple reliance upon God, can

triumph over the most tragic fate. Adèle Kamm has taught us that we may meet the mysteries of pain and life and death with joyful courage. 'Life and death,' she said once, 'are alike joy to me.'



# DATE DUE

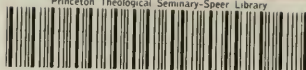
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